

Routledge Studies in the Biblical World

RELIGION, ETHNICITY AND XENOPHOBIA IN THE BIBLE

**A THEORETICAL, EXEGETICAL AND THEOLOGICAL
SURVEY**

Brian Rainey



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RELIGION, ETHNICITY AND XENOPHOBIA IN THE BIBLE

“This is a thoroughly researched, multidisciplinary monograph which utilises a wide range of scholarship in order to trace portrayals of the ‘foreigners’ in biblical texts, and a variety of other relevant primary evidence. Rainey writes thoughtfully and brings strong theoretical foundations into dialogue with incisive analysis of texts. The monograph illustrates and highlights the various nuances of the enduring, and never more topical, nature of xenophobia, ethnicity, and religion.”

Katherine Southwood, *University of Oxford, UK*

Religion, Ethnicity and Xenophobia in the Bible looks at some of the Bible’s most hostile and violent anti-foreigner texts and raises critical questions about how students of the Bible and ancient Near East should grapple with “ethnicity” and “foreignness” conceptually, hermeneutically and theologically. The author uses insights from social psychology, cognitive psychology, anthropology, sociology and ethnic studies to develop his own perspective on ethnicity and foreignness.

Starting with legends about Mesopotamian kings from the third millennium BCE, then navigating the Deuteronomistic and Holiness traditions of the Hebrew Bible, and finally turning to Deuterocanonicals and the Apostle Paul, the book assesses the diverse and often inconsistent portrayals of foreigners in these ancient texts. This examination of the negative portrayal of foreigners in biblical and Mesopotamian texts also leads to a broader discussion about how to theorize ethnicity in biblical studies, ancient studies and the humanities. This volume will be invaluable to students of ethnicity and society in the Bible, at all levels.

Brian Rainey is Assistant Professor of Old Testament at Princeton Theological Seminary, USA.

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ABBREVIATIONS

AB	Anchor Bible Commentary
ABRL	Anchor Bible Reference Library
ADFU	Ausgrabungen der deutschen Forschungsgemeinschaft Uruk-Warka
AfO	<i>Archiv für Orientforschung</i>
AHw	<i>Akkadisches Handwörterbuch</i> . Wolfram von Soden. 3 Vols. Wiesbaden, 1965–
AnBib	Analecta Biblica
ANET	<i>Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament</i> . Edited by J.B. Pritchard. 2 Vols. Princeton, 1969.
Ant.	Josephus, <i>Antiquities of the Jews</i>
AO	Antiquités orientales (Louvre)
AOAT	Alter Orient und Altes Testament
AOTC	Apollos Old Testament Commentary (InterVarsity Press)
ASOR	American Schools of Oriental Research
ATANT	Abhandlung zur Theologie des Alten und Neuen Testaments
AV	Authorized Version (King James Version)
BASOR	<i>Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research</i>
BHS	Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia
Bib	<i>Biblica</i>
BiOr	<i>Bibliotheca Orientalis</i>
BJS	Brown Judaic Studies
BM	British Museum
BWL	<i>Babylonian Wisdom Literature</i> . W.G. Lambert. Oxford, 1960.
BZABR	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für altorientalische und biblische Rechtsgeschichte
BZAW	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft
BZRA	Beiträge zur Religionsgeschichte des Altertums

ABBREVIATIONS

CAD	<i>The Assyrian Dictionary of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago</i> . Edited by Ignace J. Gelb et al. Chicago, 1956–
CAH	<i>The Cambridge Ancient History</i> . Second Edition. 14 vols. Cambridge, 1970–
CANE	<i>Civilizations of the Ancient Near East</i> . Edited by Jack M. Sasson. New York, 1995–
CBET	Contributions to Biblical Exegesis and Theology
CBQ	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>
CH	Code of Hammurabi
CTA	<i>Corpus des tablettes en cunéiformes alphabétiques découvertes à Ras Shamra-Ugarit de 1929 à 1939</i> . Edited by André Herdner. Paris, 1963.
CTH	<i>Catalogue des textes hittites</i> . Paris, 1971.
DATD A	Das Alte Testament Deutsch Apokryphen
DCLS	Deuterocanonical and Cognate Literature Studies (De Gruyter)
EA	<i>Die El-Amarna Tafeln</i> . Jürgen A. Knudtzon. Leipzig, 1915.
ePSD	The Pennsylvania Sumerian Dictionary
ET	English translation
ETCSL	Electronic Text Corpus of Sumerian Literature
FAS	Freiburger altorientalische Studien
FRLANT	Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments
HALOT	<i>Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament</i> . Edited by Ludwig Kohler and Walter Baumgartner. Third Edition. 5 Volumes. Leiden, 2000.
HAR	<i>Hebrew Annual Review</i>
HThKAT	Herders theologischer Kommentar zum Alten Testament
HTR	<i>Harvard Theological Review</i>
IDB	<i>The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible</i> . Edited by George A. Buttrick. 4 Vols. Nashville, 1962.
IEJ	<i>Israel Exploration Journal</i>
JAJ	<i>Journal of Ancient Judaism</i>
JANES	<i>Journal of the American Near Eastern Society</i>
JAOS	<i>Journal of the American Oriental Society</i>
JBL	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
JCS	<i>Journal of Cuneiform Studies</i>
JHS	<i>Journal of Hebrew Scriptures</i>
JNES	<i>Journal of Near Eastern Studies</i>
JPS	Jewish Publication Society
JSJS	Supplements to the Journal for the Study of Judaism/ Journal for the Study of Judaism Supplement Series

ABBREVIATIONS

JSNTSup	Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series
JSOT	<i>Journal for the Study of the Old Testament</i>
JSOTSup	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series
KAI	<i>Kanaanäische und Aramäische Inschriften</i> . Herbert Donner and Wolfgang Röllig. 2 vols. Wiesbaden, 2002.
KTU/CAT	<i>Die keilalphabetischen Texte aus Ugarit</i> . Edited by M. Dietrich, O. Lorentz and J. Sanmartin. Neukirchen-Vluyn, 1976/ <i>The Cuneiform Alphabetic Texts from Ugarit, Ras Ibn Hani, and Other Places</i> . Münster, 1995.
KUB	<i>Keilschrifturkunden aus Boghazköi</i> . Berlin, 1921–
LHBOTS	Library of Hebrew Bible, Old Testament Studies
LXX	Septuagint
MAH	Musée d'Art et d'Histoire, Geneva
MT	Masoretic Text
NASB	New American Standard Bible
NEchtB AT	Die neue echter Bibel Kommentar zum Alten Testament
NES	Near Eastern Studies
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version
OBO	Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis
RAI	Papers Read at the Rencontre assyriologique internationale
RB	<i>Revue Biblique</i>
RIMA	Royal Inscriptions of Mesopotamia, Assyrian Periods
RIME	Royal Inscriptions of Mesopotamia, Early Periods
RINA	Royal Inscriptions of the Neo-Assyrian Period
RIA	<i>Reallexikon der Assyriologie</i> . Edited by Erich Ebeling, et al. Berlin, 1928–
SAAB	State Archives of Assyria Bulletin
SAACT	State Archives of Assyria Cuneiform Texts
SAALT	State Archives of Assyria Literary Texts
SAAS	State Archives of Assyria, Studies
SBLWAW	Society of Biblical Literature Writings from the Ancient World Series
SbTU	<i>Spätbabylonische Texte aus Uruk</i> . Hermann Hunger. Berlin, 1976.
SEM	<i>Sumerian Epics and Myths</i> . Edward Chiera. Oriental Institute Publications 15. Chicago, 1934.
SHKK	Schriften des Historischen Kollegs Kolloquien
Spec. Leg.	Philo, <i>Special Laws</i>
SR	<i>Sumerische Rechtsurkunden des III. Jahrtausends: aus der Zeit vor der III. Dynastie von Ur</i> . Dietz-Otto Edzard. Munich, 1968.

ABBREVIATIONS

TBC	Torch Bible Commentaries
TCS	Texts from Cuneiform Sources
TDOT	<i>Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament</i> . Edited by G. Johannes Botterweck and Helmer Ringgren. Grand Rapids, 1977.
TSAJ	Texts and Studies in Ancient Judaism
UF	<i>Ugarit-Forschungen</i>
VAS	Vorderasiatische Schriftdenkmaler
VAT	Vorderasiatisches Museum, Berlin
VT	<i>Vetus Testamentum</i>
VTSup	Vetus Testamentum Supplements/Supplements to Vetus Testamentum
WUNT	Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament
ZAW	<i>Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>

BIBLICAL SCHOLARSHIP AND “THE OTHER”

Introduction

As I was in the middle of working on my dissertation, an early incarnation of what would become this book, Trayvon Martin, a black seventeen-year-old was shot dead by George Zimmerman in Sanford, Florida, a suburb of Orlando. The seemingly slow reaction from the local police and the police department’s refusal to arrest Zimmerman—based on their own reading of Florida’s “Stand Your Ground” statute—led to local protests, which then caught the attention of the national news media. The incident touched off a long-standing conflict over the social status of black Americans and, in particular, their treatment by the legal system. An interesting aspect of the incident and its political aftermath involved the portrayal of Zimmerman. At first, he was labeled a white man, but after some of his family members mentioned that he had some Latin American heritage, some media outlets referred to him as “white Hispanic.” It was an extraordinarily controversial term that drew criticism from multiple quarters. One columnist for the *Huffington Post*’s Latino Voices stated that the “clumsy terminology was a result of a misunderstanding of Latino ethnicity...Latinos are a multiracial ethnicity. What we have in common is Latin American or Hispanic birth or heritage.”¹ Interestingly, the column affirms that ethnicity is a social construct, yet it simultaneously implies that ethnic and racial categories are objective realities. For the author, there is something clear and verifiable about Latinx ethnicity that can be “misunderstood” and distorted.

Since Martin’s slaying, Eric Garner, a black man accused of selling loose, tax-free cigarettes, died after he was placed in a police chokehold (a procedure banned by the NYPD). Right on the heels of that police homicide, Michael Brown, a young black man, was shot dead by Officer Darren Wilson (who was white) in the town of Ferguson, Missouri, a suburb of St. Louis. The city of Ferguson exploded in demonstrations, and some rioting and looting sporadically took place as well. Subsequent examinations of municipal ordinances and law enforcement procedures in the city of Ferguson, including an investigation by the Department of Justice, found that the city, especially the police,

participated in systemic discrimination against its mostly black residents. After Brown’s death, a steady stream of reports about black men—and also women and children—killed by police ran through the media. Some of the more prominent of the slain included: Tamir Rice, only 12 years old, Akai Gurley, Eric Harris, Walter Scott, Philando Castile and Jordan Edwards, only 15 years old. As this project unfolded, I found myself adding more names to this list. In April of 2015, Baltimore, Maryland was the next city to erupt in rage after the death of Freddy Gray. As usual, the television media provided in-depth coverage of the clashes with police, destruction of property and looting, but gave far less attention to exposing the systemic problems that led to the outbursts. During the period of protest in both Ferguson and Baltimore, cable networks chose to use their twenty-four-hour news cycles to replay footage of looting or property destruction on continuous loops instead of in-depth investigative reporting about the social and political circumstances that fueled the discontent.

Clearly, ethnicity and race garner much attention in America. The continuing debate over immigration around the world, the 2016 Presidential election in the US, the Brexit vote in the UK, the French presidential election of 2017, the ongoing war between Israel and the Palestinians, the fracturation of the Middle East and the increased prominence of far-right, protofascist parties in Europe all but guarantee that discussions of ethnicity and race will continue unabated into the future. The famous black social critic and activist, W.E.B. DuBois called race the “problem of the twentieth century,” but it is poised to be a major problem, if not *the* problem of the twenty-first century as well. Modern societies face deep ethnic conflicts, but the conflict between those deemed “native” and those deemed “foreign” is nothing new. Controversies over the treatment of those deemed outsiders or “alien” in some way are probably as old as human beings themselves and may even pre-date the existence of humanity as we know it. This book is mainly about the treatment of ethnic foreigners in the Bible, but it is also about the concept of foreignness and human categorization itself.

“Ethnic Foreigners” in the Hebrew Bible and Mesopotamian texts

This book will examine literary portrayals of peoples who were labeled “foreigners” in biblical literature as well as some portrayals of foreigners in Mesopotamian literature. I have used the English word “foreigner” to describe the characterizations of certain groups within the Hebrew Bible, but anyone who wishes to use a modern term to signify an ancient phenomenon must wrestle with the fact that the peoples who inhabited the ancient world held vastly different assumptions and expectations about nature, the world and the divine. This is not a new problem; those who study ancient cultures realize that there is a gulf between the worldviews of modern peoples and the worldviews of ancient peoples.²

In an attempt to tackle the problem, this book considers a variety of perspectives—anthropological, sociological, psychological and cognitive—to theorize the notions of “foreignness” portrayed in certain biblical texts and select Mesopotamian texts. It is my view that the kind of foreignness that is portrayed in biblical texts and to a lesser degree in Mesopotamian texts can typically be described as *ethnic foreignness*. To put it another way, the writers of the biblical texts that I explore usually understood the foreigners that they depicted as members of distinct *ethnic groups*. This introduction and the chapter that follows explore what I mean by “ethnic groups.” Of course, by referring to these foreigners as ethnic foreigners or members of ethnic groups, I believe that the notion of “ethnicity” is an appropriate concept by which to understand how ancient texts portray foreigners. “Ethnicity” is not a notion only appropriate for analyzing some concepts of foreignness in the modern world,³ but is a theoretical frame that can be used to analyze constructions of foreignness in antiquity as well.

When it comes to the study of the Bible, a collection of ancient texts and the main subject matter of this book, it is not uncommon to encounter scholars—even scholars writing in recent years—who use words such as “ethnicity” and/or “race” to describe the kind of foreignness portrayed in the Bible, with little theoretical reflection on these highly controversial terms. Writing about the exclusion of foreigners in the book of Ezra–Nehemiah, a later biblical text likely composed in the fifth century BCE, Hannah K. Harrington says that for the authors of Ezra–Nehemiah, “people of other *races* are simply not eligible for Israel’s holy status.”⁴ In his *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament* article on the word *gôy* (“nation”) in the Hebrew Bible, Ronald Clements holds that concepts of “race, government and territory” are a part of the definition of the term.⁵ To be fair, these articles are not written to be sociological or anthropological studies on ethnicity, so a reader should not expect a long, drawn-out theoretical discussion about ethnicity. At the same time, considering that the terms “race” and “ethnicity” are contested, it is interesting that so many make casual references to them. I would suggest that the casual references to ethnicity and race are not due to carelessness or sloppiness on the part of scholars, but that there is a very good reason.

The reason for these casual references is simple: scholars are human beings, both in the sense that we err and make mistakes and also in that we cannot help but see similarities between ancient peoples and ourselves. In addition to understanding that thousands of years separate a modern biblical scholar from an ancient Israelite, we understand that people who lived in the ancient world were also just as human as we are. Consequently, what people thought, said or did in antiquity ought to be, at least in part, comprehensible to us. Obviously, there must be some congruity between modern concepts of foreignness and ancient concepts of foreignness, otherwise, it would be thoroughly impossible to apprehend the terms, *nokrî*, *zār*, *KÚR*, or *nakru/nakāru*—some Hebrew, Sumerian and Akkadian words translated

"foreign(er)." Even though translators must make philological arguments to draw out the nuances and precise meanings of these words, there must be points of reference by which modern readers can understand what ancient peoples were talking about when they use words typically translated as "foreigner." Yet, just as there may be deep similarities, there are equally profound differences. The art of interpretation involves navigating a complex web of both understanding and misunderstanding, and navigating the web when it comes to the idea of foreignness in ancient texts can be extraordinarily difficult. One of the questions I want to answer is whether or not this term "ethnicity" is helpful for a modern interpreter who wishes to understand the foreigners depicted in ancient texts. My theory is that there is "something" in the way that foreigners are depicted in biblical texts that prompts scholars and modern readers to use the word "ethnicity," and I want to talk, as precisely as possible, about what that "something" might be.

The use of the term "ethnicity," even in a modern context, is controversial enough, demonstrated by the ferocious debates over what constitutes an "ethnic group" within the humanities. The debate between so-called "primordialists" and "instrumentalists" that persisted from the late 1960s through the late 1990s is just one example of the controversy over defining ethnic groups.⁶ Primordialists are best understood as theorists who see ethnicity as an outgrowth of real kinship networks and rooted in the structures and customs that developed within real kinship networks. The "primordialist" view is traditionally represented by Clifford Geertz and his famous idea that primordial attachments such as blood ties, speech and custom "flow more from a sense of natural—some would say spiritual—affinity than from social interaction" that "have ineffable and...overpowering coerciveness."⁷ Primordialists vary in how broad they are in their language. Some are more prone to make sweeping statements about how deep, "natural" and inexplicable these "primordial" kinship connections are. Other "primordialists" attempt to use sociobiology to explain the extension of the idea of kinship to ethnic groups.⁸ "Instrumentalists" argue that ethnicity is a strategy pursued by interested actors or groups. They stress the strategies by which people construct ethnic boundaries, and see the content of ethnic group perception as highly malleable and contextually dependent.⁹

My own view is that ethnicity is a way of categorizing people in which common ancestry and common territorial origins are conspicuously important components of ethnic group conceptualization. Katherine E. Southwood's understanding closely approximates my own viewpoint:

The contents of an ethnic identity are defined situationally, on an emic level, according to the subjective criteria and requirements of the group in question and in relation to other groups with whom interaction occurs. Numerous cultural features, such as religion, class, caste, or language, may be symbolically manipulated by ethnic

groups in accordance with such identities. Unlike other identities, the sense of ethnic solidarity and cultural uniqueness crystallizes around putative myths of descent, associations with territories, and shared "historical" memories.¹⁰

For readers who may see this as grossly oversimplified, more nuances, complexities and arguments will be spelled out in Chapter Two. My own perspective does not require that ethnic group constructions necessarily "crystallize around" common ancestry and territory. Rather, ethnicity is a classification scheme in which, among the various social or cultural "features" that might define ethnic groups, purported common ancestry (often expressed in terms of "blood," "heredity," or "descent") *and* common territorial origins play significant—but not necessarily the *most* significant—roles in delineating group membership.¹¹ By "territorial origins," I mean the territory with which the ethnic group is associated and affiliated—i.e., its "homeland." The ethnic group need not have absolutely originated in its ascribed "homeland," from a historical-critical perspective, but at a (largely arbitrary) point in history the group becomes linked to a particular territory.¹² I have settled on this way of understanding ethnicity to respond to some difficulties that have arisen in attempts to define it.

The first difficulty involves separating "ethnicity" from other ways in which we categorize human beings. There are a variety of ways in which people place human beings into stable, seemingly unchangeable categories, such as: race, gender, ethnicity, class, caste, tribe, nationality, religious background and sometimes occupation. The key question is what separates ethnicity from the numerous other ways that people categorize human beings. While reams of paper have been filled on the topic, "What is ethnicity?," it is still unclear why we should use the word ethnicity, *and not* other terminology that, in certain circumstances, may fit just as well, if not better. The definitions of ethnicity laid out by many seem to encompass a very wide range of social categories—so wide, in fact, that that the term ethnicity loses any kind of special meaning or descriptive value. If ethnicity could, according to these broad definitions, theoretically encompass social categories such as class, caste, nationality and religion, why is the term "ethnicity" so important? Even if we were to argue that ethnicity and other social categories can overlap, we would need to explain the overlap. If one were to propose that ethnicity is a variation of caste, for example, several questions arise. What differentiates ethnicity from caste? What makes something an *ethnic* caste? What sociological or cultural factors warrant the qualifier "ethnic"? Once we start to answer those questions, or once we start thinking about what differentiates "caste" from "ethnicity," or once we start discussing why the two terms are related at all, we have begun to establish criteria for distinguishing one form of categorization from another. It might seem as though the fluidity and constructedness of ethnicity militates against proposing clear, "objective" criteria by which to

define it. But if we end up expounding on how ethnicity is, or is not, related to similar social categories, anyway, it seems as though the argument for establishing an extremely broad definition for ethnicity loses its force.

The second difficulty is that scholars seem unable to let go of ethnicity as a descriptor. Ethnicity remains a remarkably stable and tenacious way of talking about social groupings. The insistence we have on using the term suggests that we see *something*—or some *things*—that make this word, and *not* other words, so compelling. As we have seen, many who study the ancient world, and other non-Western cultures have difficulty using only *emic* terms (that is, only terminology indigenous to the society under investigation) to describe certain human categorizations they find in the societies or texts they are researching.

The way that sociologist Frederik Barth describes ethnic groups, in his seminal essay on ethnic group boundaries, is a case in point. Barth's major contribution to the study of ethnicity is his view that ethnic groups should not be defined by a list of cultural traits that define the group ("trait inventories"), but rather by the process by which ethnic groups form boundaries with other ethnic groups.¹³ Despite his critical insight that ethnic boundaries are fluid, Barth interestingly assumes that the ethnic categories themselves are fixed and enduring. Barth writes that "ethnic categories provide an organizational vessel that may be given varying amounts and forms of content in different socio-cultural systems."¹⁴ In other words, ethnic categories act as conduits for various cultural practices and traditions that, selectively, serve as distinctions between different ethnic groups. If ethnic categories are organizational vessels, two questions emerge. First, why refer to these categories as *ethnic* categories in the first place? What makes these particular cultural distinctions between peoples warrant the word, "ethnic"? Second, why do the ethnic categories themselves remain stable as "organizational vessels?" If the content is variable, why does the ethnic category itself endure? It seems that most anthropologists, sociologists and historians feel the need to employ the word "ethnicity" with respect to social divisions, even as they expound on its limitations and fluidity.

The final difficulty is that ethnicity and race are significant terms in the contemporary world. As noted, in the United States, race and ethnicity are at the forefront of political and social discourse. Even if race and ethnicity are merely Western constructs, for better or worse, the language of race and ethnicity is now a part of international law, politics and diplomacy; so, the idiom of ethnicity has become global. If the concept of ethnicity is such an important part of our social world, it may be impossible, or at the very least extremely awkward, to eliminate it from academic discussion.¹⁵ Not only will our current social context continue to impel us to "see" ethnicity, but students will continue to ask questions that assume ethnicity is an important form of human categorization. I will argue at the end of this book that we cannot ultimately separate academic scholarship from ethical concerns. Any

scholarly understanding of ethnicity—even those that express skepticism about the usefulness of the word—must take seriously modern usage of the word. Furthermore, establishing a highly idiosyncratic, academic definition of ethnicity that is largely divorced from the ways that ethnicity is understood today also seems problematic.

If interpretation is an art, any interpreter must choreograph an extremely complicated dance between understanding and misunderstanding. With respect to understanding, I assume that there are points of correspondence between the way that many understand ethnicity today and certain ways of describing people in ancient texts. In particular, what we call "ethnicity" has deep resonances with many concepts of foreignness in the Hebrew Bible and Mesopotamian texts. However, if we continue to use ethnicity in academic discourse, and even as a function of law, we should discuss the limitations of modern understandings, especially modern lay understandings. The proposals I offer here seek to link, in a more defined way, modern understandings of ethnicity with similar ways of categorizing people in ancient societies, and to effectively distinguish ethnicity as a unique way of categorizing people. My reading of the anthropological, sociological and psychological literature leads me to believe that common ancestry and common territorial origins (i.e., the "homeland" associated with the ethnic group) are related, in a fundamental way, to ethnicity. The next chapter will explore in more detail what I mean by common ancestry and common territorial origins and their specific relationship to ethnicity.

My theoretical outlook affirms that there are similarities between the way we talk about ethnicity and the way that ancient peoples understood foreignness, but also that there are differences. Some important differences between modern and ancient concepts that we will explore are the varied cultural understandings of "ancestry" and "territory." In the modern era, the discovery of genetics and DNA continue to affect the notions of "ancestry" and "descent" that operate within contemporary conceptualizations of ethnicity. For modern concepts of ethnicity, "ancestry" often means "genetic similarity," and this is especially true for the notion of "race," which makes physical characteristics central to the classification of ethnic groups. In the ancient world, by contrast, "ancestry" was often thought of in terms of putative genealogies or descent from a common ancestor. That a sense of common ancestry is a critical component of ethnic group perception is widely accepted by theorists of ethnicity. However, the view that common origin from a particular territory is a crucial component of ethnicity is not as commonly accepted.

At times, I will refer to ethnicity as a form of group perception or group conceptualization because it is primarily a worldview and something that takes place in the mind. As Rogers Brubaker puts it, ethnic groups do not exist in an ontological sense "out there" waiting to be discovered by anthropologists.¹⁶ Brubaker responds to other scholars who "treat ethnic groups as substantial

entities to which interests and agency can be attributed.” Ultimately, however, “ethnicity is fundamentally not a thing in the world but a perspective on the world.”¹⁷ Of course, claiming that ethnicity is a perspective on the world is not to say that ethnic groups are “not real” or that they are merely figments of human imagination. The authorization and enactment of group perception within socio-political structures is very real and can have measurable impacts on people’s minds and bodies.¹⁸

The challenges of defining ethnicity in biblical scholarship and the humanities

Biblical scholars who do engage in a theoretical discussion about ethnicity sometimes settle on a definition that is so broad that it is difficult to distinguish “ethnicity,” as they define it, from other categories into which people divide themselves (e.g., caste, clan, profession). As James C. Miller points out in his review article on ethnicity in Hebrew Bible scholarship:

At this juncture, scholars often conflate ethnicity with “groupness” of any kind. In light of the amount of attention devoted to defining and analyzing ethnicity in social-science literature over the last few decades, biblical scholarship should provide more nuanced understandings of ethnicity. Although a more exacting definition of ethnicity will make the task of locating such an ethnic Israel more difficult, unless such a task is undertaken, the term “ethnicity” is largely meaningless.¹⁹

For Miller, both biblical archaeology and the textual analysis of the Bible suffer from this lack of clarity. But it is a problem that biblical scholarship has inherited from anthropological and sociological theories of ethnicity. If ethnicity is a social construction based on the social importance of certain behaviors in a specific social context, it seems best to stick with emic terminology. Why use a—usually alien—term such as “ethnicity” to describe this phenomenon at all?²⁰

Ethnicity has become so broad that at times the term seems to have little explanatory power. Richard H. Thompson’s definition of “ethnic behaviors,” which he describes as “those human behaviors that are, at a minimum based on cultural or physical criteria in a social context in which these criteria are relevant,”²¹ nicely captures the impact of social constructionism on theories of ethnicity. It seems as though Thompson’s description of “ethnic behaviors” boils down to the observation that the social construction of ethnicity is socially constructed.²² Miller’s summary of theoretical views on ethnicity in biblical scholarship also shows that definitions of ethnicity can be extraordinarily broad. According to Miller, there are several recurring themes in biblical scholarship on ethnicity:

1. Ethnicity is a social activity.
2. Ethnicity is a changing, socially constructed phenomenon.
3. Ethnic solidarity is situational.
4. The boundary-defining process of ethnic group formation takes place on aggregative and oppositional levels: aggregative: within the group there are debates about identity construction; oppositional: in relation to those outside the group.
5. Ethnic boundaries are permeable.²³

All of these ideas basically communicate that ethnicity is a fluid social construct, but these ideas can also describe any kind of group construction. Is not the formation of every kind of group "social," "situational," "permeable" and based on debates about who is "in" and "out"? Ethnic groups may indeed be a social construction, but the way they have been thought of as a social construction has, as Miller points out, led to a tendency for scholars to conflate ethnicity with "groupness" of any kind.

Despite the emphasis that the social constructionist perspective places on fluidity, some biblical scholars have been willing to propose criteria that distinguish ethnicity from other kinds of group constructions. Many contend that a belief that group members share a common ancestry is a critical component of ethnicity. Biblical scholar Kenton L. Sparks argues that ethnicity is primarily based on "natural affiliations of kinship beyond the immediate family."²⁴ Miller concurs, asserting that "it is shared ancestry, however fictive, that distinguishes an ethnic group from racial, religious, national, cultural, or other forms of social collectivities."²⁵ Markus Zehnder also agrees that a "common myth of descent" is a "constitutive component of ethnic consciousness."²⁶ Making common descent the *only* thing that distinguishes ethnicity from other ways in which people are categorized runs into a problem when it becomes necessary to distinguish ethnicity from other kinds of "kinship beyond the immediate family." For example, are extended kinship groups such as *clans* and *bands* examples of ethnic groups? Are rivalries between large family groups such as the Hatfields and McCoys or Montagues and Capulets examples of "ethnic group" rivalries? More relevant to biblical studies, are the conflicts between priestly families in the Hebrew Bible, such as the antagonism between the descendants of Korah and the descendants of Aaron (Num 16:1–17:5 [ET 16:1–40]), both of whom trace their lineage to a common ancestor Levi, ethnic conflicts?

Another problem with asserting that only a belief that group members share a common ancestry distinguishes ethnicity from other ways of categorizing people is that, as Cohen points out, "often exclusive groupings like status, 'class,' religious or ethnic groups maintain the claim of being descendants from the same ancestors."²⁷ Assuming Cohen is correct, if common ancestry is the only basis by which one should distinguish ethnic groups from other group formations, one must have a very broad view of what constitutes an

ethnic group.²⁸ This broad view of ethnicity would have to concede that class, status, and religious identity could also serve as ethnic identities.²⁹ In fact, for Cohen stockbrokers in the city of London exhibit traits of "ethnicity." Because they are recruited from the same schools, speak the same "language," practice similar customs (e.g., wearing top hats as a marker), stockbrokers are "as distinct from British society as are the Hawsa within Yoruba society" and are "as 'ethnic' as any ethnic group can be."³⁰

In addition to Cohen's London stockbrokers example, there are other social groupings based on descent that are not always considered ethnic groups. Caste and class distinctions are based on heredity, but should classes and castes be considered ethnic groups? The answer is far from simple. In India, advocates for the Dalit (so-called "untouchable") caste have, in some cases, asserted their human rights by invoking International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD), which highlights descent as an illegitimate basis for discrimination. In Article 1, CERD defines "racial discrimination" as "any distinction, exclusion, restriction or preference based on race, colour, descent, or national or ethnic origin which has the purpose or effect of nullifying or impairing the recognition, enjoyment or exercise, on an equal footing, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural or any other field of public life."³¹ Interestingly, the United Nations makes "race" an overarching category under which it subsumes a variety of other human categorizations such as ethnic or national origin. On the other hand, some Dalit advocacy organizations argue for changes in the existing framework of UN resolutions because the idea of "race" does not quite capture the kind of discrimination faced by Dalits.³² The International Dalit Solidarity Network (IDSN) "considers caste (and related discrimination and exclusion) to be a unique phenomenon" and "distinct from the concept of race" even though "both types of discrimination produce comparable forms of political, economic and social exclusion."³³ IDSN argues that "precisely because of its unique nature...caste discrimination warrants separate and distinctive treatment in the UN human rights system." The opinion of IDSN, and CERD's description of racial discrimination, accentuate the problems with the definition of ethnicity and race. Both documents understand that a variety of human categories—such as race and caste—are closely related. CERD gives all of these closely related categories the force of international law by subsuming them under one category, "race." It seems that CERD's definition attempts to capture a variety of cultural manifestations of discrimination based on purportedly stable, unchanging categories. It also uses two words often associated with ethnicity: descent and origin. Nevertheless, despite CERD's comprehensive definition, some who face caste discrimination do not feel that the idea of "race" reflects their experience. It would seem as though we need clearer definitions of ethnicity and race that allow us to differentiate it from other ways of categorizing people.

"The Other"

Adding to the problem of the extremely broad conceptualization of ethnicity has been the propensity for scholars to speak of ethnicity as a way of constructing "the Other." Lori Rowlett, in her exploration of "insiders" and "outsiders" in the book of Joshua writes, "Times of turmoil tend to produce narratives of identity, requiring a set of axiomatic principles, usually unspoken, but inscribed in the text, which differentiate between 'us' and 'them' (the Other). The conquest narrative of the Book of Joshua is such a narrative of identity."³⁴ Similarly, Zehnder notes, "from an anthropological and sociological perspective, 'otherness' and 'alienness' represent an inextricable pull on human existence. The opposition, 'I'/'We'-'Other'/'Alien' 'is a common feature of social discourse.' The designation of the Other in general and also the alien is always the essential opposite to the designation of one's own identity, both on the individual as well as the collective levels."³⁵ In humanistic scholarship, the Other or "self and other" have come to simply mean "things-that-are-different." But using such a concept to explain "ethnicity" does not help with the original question I raised in this chapter, which is, "why use 'ethnicity' and *not* some other word?"

When Jonathan Z. Smith theorizes the meaning of the Other, he shows that this term can apply to virtually any way that people are divided into groups: "the most basic sense of the 'other' is generated by the opposition IN/OUT. That is to say, a preoccupation with boundary, with limit (in the primary sense of threshold) seems fundamental to our construction of ourselves with others."³⁶ Smith is uncomfortable with the use of the "other" because it is dualistic, absolute and "always invites misunderstandings, suggesting, as it does, an ontological cleavage rather than an anthropological distinction."³⁷ Smith prefers the language of "difference" because "difference" demonstrates that there is a reciprocal relationship between sameness and difference. Sameness builds off of differentiation and vice versa, and what might be considered different in one context might be considered the same from another perspective. "Difference," as Smith understands it, is a "mode of both culturally encoding and decoding, of relativizing internal as well as external distinctions."³⁸ To use an example from the Hebrew Bible, the differences between Israelites and other Canaanites from the vantage point of modern interpreters is small. Available archaeological evidence indicates that the Israelites arose indigenously in the Levant, practiced religion in a way typical of Levantine peoples, and that the Hebrew language itself is a "Canaanite" dialect. Israelite culture is a variation of Canaanite culture. From the perspective of many biblical writers, however, Canaanites and Israelites could not be more different. For example, Gen 9:18–27 asserts that Canaanites descended from a different ancestor than did Israelites. While Canaanites descended from Ham, one of the sons of Noah, Israelites descended from Shem, another one of Noah's sons. Other biblical texts that make sharp distinctions between Canaanites

and Israelites include Lev 18:3 and Deut 7:1–6—both texts that I will discuss in subsequent chapters. Smith's explication of difference is clearly useful for looking at a variety of in-group/out-group distinctions. It also demonstrates that the ideas of "otherness" and "difference" do not explain how ethnicity differs from other ways people are categorized.

Though the concept of the Other is common in humanistic scholarship, scholars can be unclear about what kind of work they expect the concept of the Other to do in their analysis of so-called Others. Aram Yengoyan notes that in anthropology, the Other is extremely abstract, with "no historical anchors, no cultural contexts, and perhaps no existence as a self. The Other is always there, a free-floating entity/category continuously invoked."³⁹ Sinologist Paul W. Kroll used his speech at the Plenary Session of the American Oriental Society's Sesquicentennial Anniversary meeting to fulminate against the obsession with "self and other" in the humanities:

Of course, every text, indeed every thing, to each of us, is...something other. But where, we may ask, does this get us, apart from manufacturing obfuscation out of the obvious and fostering the juvenile illusion that, merely because we have learned to say we've "engaged in discourse with a circular disk arranged so as to revolve on an axis," we have ourselves invented the wheel and for that merit kudos and a chaired professorship...⁴⁰

Though I disagree with his tone, Kroll does have a point in that humanistic scholars can be too imprecise with their use of the Other. The Other does quite a bit of work for a number of philosophers and it would help immensely if humanistic scholars would clarify what they mean when they refer to the Other.⁴¹ Zehnder briefly notes that Hegel distinguishes a self-consciousness that is a consciousness of a subjective self with respect to objects in the world against a self-consciousness that is conscious of itself *as an object of other subjects*.⁴² "Others" as in other consciousnesses play a crucial role in Hegel's dialectic of Recognition in which the self struggles with other selves for mutual recognition. For Hegel, genuine self-consciousness takes place only when self-consciousness is not conditioned on power relations (one self subordinating another self). The basic idea that recognition of "others" is somehow fundamental to the formation of the "I" is a notion that runs through many philosophical traditions, especially within phenomenology.

In many instances, when humanities scholars discuss ethnicity they refer to the idea that the Other is fundamentally constitutive of the "I," as Zehnder notes above. One problem with this kind of general use of the Other is that the precise role that the Other plays in the constitution of the self varies depending on the author: compare the work that "others" do for Hegel's subject with the work that the self-as-other does for Jacques Lacan's "mirror stage" in which the self turns the self into an "other" (the *petit autre*).⁴³ Most

biblical scholars and indeed most humanists refer to this mysterious Other without commenting at all on its rich philosophical history, and without commenting on how the term helps understand the particular “others” they discuss. If “the other” is somehow crucial to the formation of the “I,” how does this insight illuminate a discussion of particular so-called “others” (e.g., women, ethnic groups, marginalized religious groups, sexual minorities, etc.), except to show that categorization is a facet of basic human experience? Furthermore, how do we even know that the perception of other groups is fundamentally related to the relationship between an individual subject and other individuals?

Moreover, if “the other” is the framework for interpreting various forms of social categorization, we must again ask why we use a word like, “ethnicity,” and do not just stick with the specific, emic terminology of “otherness” and “difference” native to the cultural discourses we study. Of course, a careful analysis of emic terminology of “difference” is essential for assessing how such concepts operated specifically, in a particular social context. However, if one wanted to draw more diachronic or broader sociological conclusions—that is, cross-cultural conclusions across time—it seems appropriate to introduce outside, or *etic*, categories of analysis. For my own assessment of biblical and Mesopotamian texts, “ethnicity” serves as a convenient etic term that explains and clarifies the kind of sociological and psychological work emic terms (such as *nokrîlben-nēkār*, *zār* and *KÚR*) are doing in some of the ancient material.

Organization

This work presumes either rudimentary knowledge of the Bible, or that the reader has access to a Bible. In a number of places, I will refer to biblical passages in parentheses, without reproducing them. If a reader is unfamiliar with the Bible, it will be helpful to have one on hand, and to be familiar with the abbreviations of biblical books, in order to follow some of the arguments. Most of the material engaged will come from the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament, but Deuterocanonical (or Apocryphal) texts as well as the letters of Paul (New Testament) will also be addressed later in the book. As a result, a Bible with both testaments as well as Deuterocanonicals would probably be best.

Chapter Two will further develop some of the ideas I laid out in this Introduction. I will discuss three theories about human mental processes that developed in the fields of cognitive science and social psychology: categorization, essentialism and entitativity. I argue that these theories can enhance the study of ethnicity by both showing how ethnicity is simultaneously like other group constructions and how ethnicity is unlike other group constructions. I also further develop my idea that ethnic group members are thought to share common ancestry and common territorial origins. Finally, I show how the

theories of social psychology and cognitive science can enhance an analysis of “ethnic foreignness” in the ancient world, specifically in the Hebrew Bible.

Chapter Three deals with Mesopotamian caricatures of foreigners, particularly peoples from the mountain ranges of Mesopotamia, such as the Gutians, who are described in highly polemical and negative ways. I focus on descriptions of foreigners that appear in tales and legends about Mesopotamian kings, especially the kings of ancient Akkad (c. 2334–2193 BCE), about whom an extensive and highly influential lore developed. These texts were selected not because they are contemporary with the texts of the Bible (most are much older), but because of their thematic material. These legends were influential for different Mesopotamian societies’ reconstruction of the past and many later Mesopotamian kings looked to the kings of Akkad as well as other legendary kings as models of kingship or as propaganda tools. Like biblical texts, these legends reconstruct the past through a moral lens. They also seem especially interested in using the exploits of the kings of the past as lessons about proper kingship and leadership. In my assessment of these texts, I pay close attention to the vocabulary used to describe foreigners and stay on the lookout for terminology that might demonstrate that the writers believe that the foreigners share common ancestry and territorial origins. I also look at the commonly recurring stereotypes that Mesopotamian writers use to characterize foreigners.

Chapter Four addresses the terminology and vocabulary of the Deuteronomistic tradition (Deuteronomy–2 Kings) and Holiness tradition (Leviticus 17–26 and various scattered passages) of the Hebrew Bible. I argue that these traditions divide Israelites and non-Israelites by common descent and territorial origins, and, consequently, conceptualize foreigners as ethnic groups. In addition to an analysis of specific Hebrew words, passages about eponymous ancestors and primordial divisions of the world into different “peoples” and “nations” play a prominent role in my assessment.

Chapter Five looks at the Deuteronomistic tradition more closely. The chapter revolves around the recurring stereotypes and polemical descriptions of foreigners that appear in the Deuteronomistic tradition. I contend that Deuteronomistic writers focus on the religious practices of ethnic foreigners in order to disparage them. For the Deuteronomistic tradition, religion defined ancient Israel’s cultural superiority over other nations and peoples and so the portrayal of religious practices was part of the rhetoric of ethnocentrism and cultural superiority that underlie the polemics against ethnic foreigners.

Chapter Six engages the Holiness tradition’s characterization of ethnic foreigners, with a special focus on the Holiness Code (Leviticus 17–26). I argue that the stereotypes of ethnic foreigners deployed by the Holiness Code revolve around the social misbehavior of the former inhabitants of the land of Canaan, which contrasts with the focus on religious customs in the polemics against foreigners in Deuteronomistic texts. In the Holiness tradition, the people who previously inhabited the land of Canaan are

characterized by extreme sexual deviancy and social injustice that includes incest, bestiality and child sacrifice. I further argue that the Holiness tradition’s portrayal of the former inhabitants of the land of Canaan is a variation on a theme found in the Patriarchal Narratives of Genesis, which portrays the Canaanites as deviants who commit acts of sexual violence and humiliation.

Chapter Seven delves into the possible diachronic effects of Deuteronomistic and Holiness polemics against ethnic foreigners on Second Temple Period Jewish texts. We will see how later authors drew on themes in the two traditions such as defective religion, sexual deviancy and divine punishment to disparage non-Jews. The chapter focuses only on certain canonical and deuterocanonical books that appeared in the Second Temple Period. The assessment starts with Ezra–Nehemiah, from the Persian period, and ends with the Apostle Paul’s divisions between Gentiles and Jews. Most of the New Testament, which was composed after the destruction of the Temple, is not included.

Finally, Chapter Eight makes positive theological proposals. It engages common attempts to explain polemics against ethnic foreigners in the Hebrew Bible for communities of faith who hold the Bible to be sacred Scripture. In this chapter, I critique different theological explanations for polemical characterizations of foreigners in the Bible and make my own theological suggestions. I also look at modern polemics against foreigners and ethnic groups, and argue that communities of faith can do more to confront ethnic conflicts in contemporary society.

Notes

- 1 “CNN’s ‘White Hispanic’ Label for George Zimmerman Draws Fire,” *Latino Voices; Huffington Post*. 12 July, 2013.
- 2 In New Testament studies, see, for example, Eric D. Barreto, *Ethnic Negotiations: The Function of Race and Ethnicity in Acts 16* (WUNT 294; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010), 30; Denise K. Buell, *Why This New Race: Ethnic Reasoning in Early Christianity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 18.
- 3 Pace Zainab Bahrani, who argues that ethnicity is a term only appropriate for the modern world. See “Race and Ethnicity in Mesopotamian Antiquity,” *World Archaeology* 38 (2006): 48–59. See also Chapter Three in this book, p. 42.
- 4 Harrington is following Peter Ackroyd’s language about “race” to characterize Ezra–Nehemiah’s conception of foreigners (Hannah K. Harrington, “Holiness and Purity in Ezra–Nehemiah,” in *Unity and Disunity in Ezra–Nehemiah: Redaction, Rhetoric and Reader* [ed. Mark J. Boda and Paul Reddit; Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix, 2008], 100; Peter R. Ackroyd, *1 and 2 Chronicles* [TBC; London: SCM Press 1973], 253). Emphasis mine.
- 5 Ronald Clements, גוי, TDOT, 429.
- 6 For a review of the many debates on ethnicity up to very recently, also see Rogers Brubaker, “Ethnicity, Race and Nationalism,” *Annual Review of Sociology* 35 (2009): 21–42.

- 7 Clifford Geertz, "The Integrative Revolution: Primordial Sentiments and Civil Politics in the New States," in *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), 259–60.
- 8 Pierre L. van den Berghe, "Race and Ethnicity: A Sociobiological Perspective," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 1 (1978): 401–11; idem, *The Ethnic Phenomenon* (New York: Elsevier, 1981). For negative reviews of "primordialism" see Richard H. Thompson, *Theories of Ethnicity: A Critical Appraisal* (New York: Greenwood, 1989), 56–67; Dermot A. Nestor, *Cognitive Perspectives on Israelite Identity* (New York: T&T Clark, 2010), 81–100.
- 9 Abner Cohen is an example of an instrumentalist who sees "ethnicity" as a social strategy (*Urban Ethnicity* [New York: Harper and Row, 1974]).
- 10 Katherine E. Southwood, *Ethnicity and the Mixed Marriage Crisis in Ezra 9–10* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 40.
- 11 Hal B. Levine describes ethnicity as a "method of classifying people (both self and other) that uses origin (socially constructed) as its primary reference... When the categories in use refer to something other than origins (e.g., sexual orientation, disability, etc.) they are not ethnic categories" ("Reconstructing Ethnicity," *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 5 [1999]: 168). Though I agree with Levine that "common origins" is essential to understanding ethnicity, my argument is that ethnicity is a concept that assumes that ethnic group members share common ancestry and territorial origins. See discussion of "Race," pp. 28–9, for why common ancestry and territorial origins may be significant, but not always the *most* important themes in every ethnic group conceptualization.
- 12 Ancient Israel is a prime example of this. Israel is associated with the "land of Canaan," but many biblical traditions say that the actual, absolute "origins" of the progenitor of Israel, Abraham, is Aram or Mesopotamia (e.g., Gen 11:27–32; 15:7; 24–5; 28; Deut 26:5; Neh 9:7).
- 13 "It is the ethnic boundary that defines the group, not the cultural stuff it encloses... ethnic groups only persist as significant units if they imply marked differences in behavior, i.e., persisting cultural differences" (Fredrik Barth, "Introduction," in *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: The Social Organization of Cultural Difference* [ed. Fredrik Barth; London: Allen & Unwin, 1969], 15–6).
- 14 Ibid., 14.
- 15 In this way, I differ slightly from Brubaker because I think that contemporary lay use of ethnicity is relevant, though not definitive, for the way that a scholar should define ethnicity. See, Brubaker and Frederick Cooper, "Beyond Identity," *Theory and Society* 29 (2000): 5.
- 16 Rogers Brubaker, Mara Loveman, and Peter Stamatov, "Ethnicity as Cognition," *Theory and Society* 33 (2004): 31–2.
- 17 Rogers Brubaker, "Ethnicity without Groups," in *The Ethnicity Reader: Nationalism, Multiculturalism and Migration* (ed. Montserrat Guibernau and John Rex; Cambridge: Policy Press, 2010), 36.
- 18 Brubaker also notes that "ethnicity works not only, or even especially, in and through bounded groups, but in and through categories, schemas, common-sense knowledge, symbols, elite and vernacular discourse, institutional forms, organizational routines, public ceremonies, and private interactions" ("Ethnicity, Race and Nationalism," 28).

- 19 James C. Miller, "Ethnicity in the Hebrew Bible," *Currents in Biblical Research* 6 (2008): 189.
- 20 Brubaker asks a similar question about the notion of "identity." Social constructionist views of "identity" propose that it is extremely fragmentary and context dependent. If this is the case, Brubaker argues, social constructionist views do not explain why something so fragmentary would be an "identity" at all ("Beyond Identity," 6).
- 21 Thompson, *Theories of Ethnicity*, 11.
- 22 See other examples in Southwood, *Ethnicity and the Mixed Marriage Crisis*, 18–20.
- 23 Miller, "Ethnicity and the Hebrew Bible," 172–3.
- 24 Kenton L. Sparks, *Ethnicity and Identity in Ancient Israel: Prolegomena to the Study of Ethnic Sentiments and Their Expression in the Hebrew Bible* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1998), 329.
- 25 Miller, "Ethnicity," 175.
- 26 "Konstitutiver Bestandteil des ethnischen Bewusstseins ist die Berufung auf eine gemeinsame Herkunft bzw. das Vorhandensein eines 'common myth of descent.'" (Markus Zehnder, *Umgang mit Fremden in Israel und Assyrien: Ein Beitrag zur Anthropologie des "Fremden" im Licht antiker Quellen* [Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2005], 27).
- 27 Abner Cohen, *Two-Dimensional Man: An Essay on the Anthropology of Power and Symbolism in Complex Society* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1976), 71.
- 28 And some scholars do, indeed, explicitly take this view.
- 29 In some contexts, of course, religious identity can be an important marker of ethnic identity (e.g., Northern Ireland, Pakistan/India, the supposed "Christian" West versus the supposed "Muslim" Middle East, etc.).
- 30 Cohen, *Urban Ethnicity*, xxi.
- 31 UN General Assembly, *International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination*, 21 December 1965, United Nations, Treaty Series, vol. 660, p. 195, available at www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/CERD.aspx
- 32 See discussion in Deepa S. Reddy, "The Ethnicity of Caste," *Anthropological Quarterly* 78 (2005): 557–72.
- 33 International Dalit Solidarity Network. *IDSN Position Paper on the Interrelations Between Caste, Descent and Race*. 15 April, 2010. <http://idsn.org/idsn-analyses-caste-descent-and-race/>
- 34 Lori Rowlett, "Inclusion, Exclusion and Marginality in the Book of Joshua," *JSOT* 55 (1992): 15.
- 35 "Auch aus anthropologischer und soziologischer Sicht bilden 'Andersheit' und 'Fremdheit' einen unaufhebbaren Zug menschlicher Existenz. Die Gegenüberstellung 'Ich'/'Wir'–'Andere'/'Fremde' 'is a common feature of social discourse.' Die Bestimmung des 'Anderen' im Allgemeinen und damit auch des 'Fremden' ist stets die notwendige Kehrseite der Bestimmung der eigenen Identität, sowohl auf der individuellen wie auch auf der kollektiven Ebene" (Zehnder, *Umgang mit Fremden*, 19).
- 36 Jonathan Z. Smith, "Differential Equations: On Constructing the Other," in idem, *Relating Religion: Essays in the Study of Religion* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), 230.
- 37 Ibid., 241.

- 38 Ibid., 245.
- 39 Aram A. Yengoyan, "Comparison and Its Discontents," in *Modes of Comparison* (ed. Aram A. Yengoyan; Ann Arbor, Mich.: University of Michigan Press, 2006), 151.
- 40 Paul W. Kroll, "Us and Them," *JAOS* 113 (1993): 457–60, 458.
- 41 One scholar who at least mentions the philosophical assumptions underlying his use of the "Other" is Richard Jenkins ("Rethinking Ethnicity," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 17 [1994]: 203–6).
- 42 Zehnder, *Umgang mit Fremden*, 17–19. Hegel writes, "Self-consciousness is, to begin with, simple being-for self, self-equal through the exclusion from itself of everything else. For it, its essence and absolute object is; and in this immediacy, or in this [mere] being, of its being-for-self, it is an *individual*. What is 'other' for it is an unessential, negatively characterized object. But the 'other' is also a self-consciousness; one individual is confronted by another individual" (*Phenomenology of Spirit*, [trans. A.V. Miller; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977], §186). See also Francis Berenson's characterization of Hegel's view: "the Other Self is the only adequate mirror of my own self-conscious self; the subject can only see itself when what it sees is another self-consciousness" ("Hegel on Others and the Self," *Philosophy* 57 [1982]: 77).
- 43 See, for example, Jacques Lacan, "The Mirror Stage as the Formulative Function of the *I* As Revealed in Psychoanalytic Experience," in idem, *Écrits: A Selection* (trans. Alan Sheridan; London: Routledge, 2001), 1–6.

BIRDS OF A FEATHER

Explaining ethnic foreignness

This chapter is dedicated to expounding on the view that ethnicity is a way of categorizing people that differs from other categorizations because common ancestry and territorial origins are key components. Here, I will employ social and cognitive psychology because they convincingly show that ethnicity plays off of intuitive mental processes all humans seem to share. My “psychological” approach is inspired by Rogers Brubaker and his colleagues¹ who view ethnicity as a form of group perception—a perspective on the world and a way in which people organize their social environment mentally, not something ontologically “out there” in the world. Brubaker’s argument allows us to take seriously the fact that people perceive ethnic groups as “primordial,” “fixed” and “natural,” even if, from a critical perspective, they are actually fluid and flexible.

Many ancient scholars prefer to emphasize the fluidity of ethnicity, arguing that the criteria used to delineate ethnic groups, such as language, dress, religion, cultural narratives, shared values, perceived common goals, connection with a specific territory and even perceived common ancestry varies. The importance of any combination of these criteria for demarcating ethnic groups depends on which criteria will be salient in specific social contexts. In some contexts, some of the aforementioned criteria will be emphasized when ethnic group identity is formed, and in other circumstances, other criteria will be emphasized. Because the salience of certain ethnic criteria is so dependent on context, many contend that it is not possible to isolate any particular criterion as the basis for ethnicity.

For example, some Early Christianity scholars, such as Caroline Johnson Hodge, Denise Kimber Buell and Eric Barreto, argue that ethnicity is so fluid and context-dependent that it is impossible to pin down one or two criteria that are essential to ethnic group identity. Hodge contends that ethnic groups are “often, but not always, asserted with claims of shared kinship. Members of ethnic groups tend to perpetuate a belief in some essential or inherent trait which binds them together.”² The “organic cohesion” of ethnic groups “can take many forms: common birthplace or current residence, adherence to the same law or religion or other daily practices...what is deemed ‘natural’ or

‘essential’ to ethnic identity is open to change and rearrangement.”³ Similarly, Barreto suggests that none of the “individual markers of ethnicity are a *sine qua non*.” Consequently, those who propose concrete criteria for ethnicity, such as perceived common ancestry, are trying to “reconcile the irreconcilable notion of ethnicity as both objective and pliable.”⁴ It is better to assess ethnicity “polythetically,” taking into account “variable ethnic markers” because they are “more consistent with flexible constructions of ethnicity.”⁵ For Buell, ethnicity is a “spectrum running from fixity to fluidity.” Some specific ethnic criteria, such as appeal to descent or “shared blood” play a role in this spectrum because “what is crucial is the *function* that genealogical claims play: namely they imbue ethnoracial identities with a sense of stability, essence and longevity.”⁶ According to Buell, then, appeals to common ancestry are not necessary components for ethnicity, but are one of many criteria that could, rhetorically at least, ground an “ethnoracial identity” as permanent and enduring—that is, something “fixed.”

To be sure, seeing ethnic group members as sharing a common essence, as a naturally occurring phenomenon and as possessing a sense of stability and longevity are absolutely central to ethnic group perception, as Hodge, Buell and Barreto have pointed out. What these scholars have highlighted as features of ethnicity are, indeed, common features of ethnicity. As I will show, they are also features of many other ways of classifying people—e.g., according to gender, sexual orientation, disability, disease, etc. Strikingly, though all of these interpreters contend that ethnicity is extremely fluid, they all agree that “ethnicity” or “race” are appropriate words to denote the categorizations employed by their New Testament or Early Christian authors.

These scholars have also rightly noted that people ground ethnic groups in a sense of permanence and cohesion. This observation seems to correspond to a debated notion in social psychology and cognitive psychology known as *essentialism*. Below I will suggest that essentialism is a necessary component of ethnicity, but because many ways of classifying people involve essentialism, it cannot resolve the specific question I asked in Chapter One: How does ethnicity differ from other ways of classifying people? Essentialism is key, but what differentiates ethnicity from other ways of categorizing centers around how people explain and understand this “essence” that ethnic group members supposedly share. With respect to ethnicity, this shared essence is linked to ethnic group members’ putative ancestry and territorial origins. Common ancestry and territory become explanations that intellectually and psychologically ground the invisible, intangible, putative essence so that it seems to be something “natural.” Consequently, the rest of the chapter will sketch how ancestry and territory become linked to the essence of ethnic group members. To do that, I will discuss three major mental components of group perception: categorization, essentialism and entitativity.

Group perception

In addition to arguing that ethnicity is a system of categorizing people, I also contended that ethnicity is a way of parsing human beings into discrete, stable groups. But what are “groups”? In order to discuss groups, I will need to talk about “group perception”—that is, how people think about groups of people and the mental processes that go into separating people into groups. There is a great deal of literature in social psychology about group perception based in experimental research, and I will be reviewing some of that literature here.

Though I emphasize that ethnicity is a form of group perception, I do not wish to overly psychologize the phenomenon of ethnicity or any group construction, for that matter. There are limits to what social psychology and cognitive psychology can tell us. As Miles Hewstone, Mark Rubin and Hazel Willis rightly state, psychological tests in a laboratory setting usually look at intergroup bias in mild forms. Indeed, “social conflict is more complex than intergroup bias and cannot be equated with the outcome of just one psychological process.”⁷ Ethnic group perception is something that people do while embedded within various social systems that give ethnic group designations real power to constrain social action both on an individual and collective level, which has measurable impact on a person’s life choices.⁸ This is one slight modification we could make to Brubaker’s insights.⁹ Ethnicity may be a matter of perception, but material, concrete social structures authorize and reinforce ethnic group perceptions and people make real decisions based on the constraints these social structures impose. So, ethnicity is indeed a perspective on the world, but the “world,” in a material sense, critically informs this perspective.

Consequently, my approach gleans terminology and ideas from social psychology and cognitive psychology but takes seriously the concrete social instantiation of group perception. Based on this approach, I conclude that ethnicity manifests itself in at least three often mutually reinforcing ways:

1. The psychological process of perceiving ethnic groups.
2. Communication about ethnic groups through speech, text or other media.
3. The authorization and manifestation of ethnic group perception in various social and political contexts.

I say “at least” three manifestations of ethnicity because there may be other manifestations which I have not considered. Each one of these constitutes a significant manifestation of ethnicity. When people construct ethnic groups, all three processes often interact with one another. However, there are cases in which ethnic group conceptualizations are not authorized and enacted in a concrete social context. Rather, an ethnic group conceptualization can remain abstract and may be expressed only through verbal and

written communication. For example, complicated racial taxonomies can be expressed in law, but not put into practice on the ground. Additionally, a number of the ethnic group references in the biblical and Mesopotamian texts reviewed in subsequent chapters seem to not refer to historical situations, but are largely mythological or prescriptive. These are ethnic group concepts communicated via text, but how these concepts manifested themselves in concrete social contexts is unknown and probably unknowable. Because an ethnic conceptualization may or may not be put into practice, any one of these three processes, individually, is a manifestation of ethnicity. The psychological aspect, the communicative aspect and the social instantiation of ethnicity are each unique, but frequently interacting, mutually reinforcing expressions of the human practice of categorizing people according to common ancestry and territorial origins.

I will use the following terminology in an attempt to express these various manifestations of ethnicity as consistently as possible:

In-group/out-group perception, (ethnic) group perception and (ethnic) group conceptualization: I use this kind of terminology when discussing psychological theories of group perception, or when discussing the psychological concepts that inform the communication (as in speech or written words) of ethnic group perception. The phrenic words “perception” and “conceptualization” show that I am drawing attention to the mental content of ethnic group perception. Below, I will outline three major components of the mental content of group perception: essentialism, entitativity and categorization.

Ethnic group, ethnic group construction: I use these expressions as well as the verb *construct* + *ethnic group* when discussing a real or imaginary social context in which ethnic group perceptions play a significant role.¹⁰ In these contexts, the groups are “real” because the authorization and enactment of ethnic group labels affect, or are imagined to affect, real aggregates of people. As far as this book is concerned, imaginary social contexts refer to the social, historical and political scenarios that appear within the literary contexts of the Hebrew Bible and Mesopotamian texts. Biblical “laws” such as those found in Deuteronomy and Leviticus may also posit imaginative social contexts in which the laws are supposed to be enacted. In Mesopotamian texts, ethnic groups are often represented in either exaggerated or fictional stories about the exploits of Mesopotamian kings. These stories depict foreign lands in an extraordinarily mythological and stylized way. Though these social scenarios are imagined, they either reflect real social contexts contemporaneous with the authors or they are constructed as if they were real social contexts. To use another example from the Hebrew Bible, the Israelite conquest of the “Canaanites” takes place in an imaginary social, historical and political context. On the other hand, the conquest, however fictional it may be, could feasibly take place

within the social world of ancient Israel and the events of the conquest are presented as events that took place in the past.

Ethnic: I apply the adjective “ethnic” to thoughts, concepts, verbal or written communications and actions inspired by a categorization in which common ancestry and common territorial origins are significant. If I use “ethnic” to describe something, it is because I believe that it can be demonstrated that the thought, communication or action is based on such a categorization.

Identity: I avoid the word, “identity” in this book. Instead, I use terms such as “label,” “appellation” and “identification.” I hesitate to use identity because I am unable to give the word a level of theoretical precision appropriate for this project. Brubaker has criticized the use of “identity,” arguing that the term is “too ambiguous, too torn between ‘hard’ and ‘soft’ meanings, essentialist connotations and constructivist qualifiers, to serve well the demands of social analysis.”¹¹ In other words, much like the word “ethnicity,” we stress the instability, fluidity and constructedness of identity but at the same time assert its central importance as something basic and foundational.

If I were to define identity, I would adopt the definition proposed by Paul DiMaggio and Hazel R. Markus. They contend that identity amounts to the “self or ‘me’ at the center of experience—a continually developing sense of awareness and agency that guides action and takes shape as the individual, both brain and body, becomes attuned to the environments it inhabits.”¹² Assuming this definition, it is nearly impossible to see “identity” in the Hebrew Bible or Mesopotamian texts because “identity” is largely subjective. Jon L. Berquist argues that biblical texts “are unlikely to reflect how ancient Judeans thought of themselves” noting that many theories of identity “emphasize objective group membership and do not easily recognize that identity operates simultaneously as external, observable reality as well as internal, personal reality.”¹³ Because we cannot interview ancient Israelites and Judahites to acquire the kind of qualitative research necessary to draw conclusions about trends in “identity” construction, perceiving “identity” in ancient texts seems extraordinarily difficult. It is conceivable that for many men, the label “Israelite” or “Judahite” may have been far less important for his quotidian experience than his role as a subsistence farmer, a father, a member of a local clan or a priest of Yahweh. Similarly, the label “Israelite” or “Judahite” may not have been nearly as important to many women’s day-to-day experience as their role as a mother, a wife, a princess, or a *zōnā*. It might be better to say that the writers of biblical and Mesopotamian texts attempt to influence the formation of the identities of those who read and internalize them. Many biblical texts argue that “Israel” *should* be a key part of a person’s identity, but whether “Israelites” in general agreed is another matter.

The manifestations of ethnicity I spelled out above are also relevant to the theoretical perspective I adopt below. Separating the mental content of ethnicity from its social and communicative manifestations is important for

determining how ethnicity is a unique form of group perception and construction. Additionally, it is only by assessing the mental content of ethnicity that one is able to understand why it is so difficult to separate ethnicity from other forms of group perception.

In 1970, Henri Tajfel performed his famous experiments on “intergroup discrimination,” and showed that dividing people up even according to arbitrary criteria could provoke strong solidarity among group members and negative attitudes toward non-group members.¹⁴ Tajfel asked test subjects, who were divided by preference for a particular painter and identified only by number, to allocate 0.10 cents between in-group and out-group members. Tajfel found that his 14- and 15-year-old test subjects clearly favored their own group over the other group. Consequently, he concluded that “when-ever we are confronted with a situation to which some form of intergroup categorization appears directly relevant, we are likely to act in a manner that discriminates against the out-group and favors the in-group.” Tajfel also argued that a “we”/“they” division was learned behavior that a subject uses to impose order on the social world in which he or she lives. The groups that Tajfel set up in his experiment seem to be just as “social,” “changing,” “situational” and even “permeable” as anything one might consider an “ethnic group.” Is there any basis, then, by which one could say that a group based on preference for a particular painter is different from a so-called “ethnic group?”

I suggest that it is difficult to separate ethnicity from other kinds of group perception because ethnicity actually shares important traits with many forms of group perception. I would also surmise that it is because ethnic group conceptualization shares so many features with other group conceptualizations that many see ethnicity as just one variation of people’s tendency to divide one another into categories of “self” and “other.”¹⁵ But ethnicity has so much in common with other ways of categorizing people because it shares some basic psychological traits with ways in which people divide their social world into groups. The next section is dedicated to an explication of three major psychological dimensions of group perception: categorization, essentialism and entitativity.

Categorization

Categorization is a way that human beings say some objects are like other objects in salient ways and more important that these objects are alike in a way that distinguishes them from other objects that may be alike in other salient ways. When it comes to inanimate objects, “salient ways” involve how people perceive an object’s “function.” The perception of function is often related to human beings’ sensorimotor relationships to objects.¹⁶ For example, the category “chair” involves similar sensorimotor movements (sitting) regardless of what kind of “chair” one has in mind (stool, armchair, divan, loveseat, etc.).

When it comes to non-human animals or plants, frequently recurring visual cues or correspondences between visual cues help people form categories. The category “bird” reflects the observation that wings and feathers are often found together on the same creature (but not always, e.g., bats). According to most theories of categorization, some category members are thought to exemplify the category more than others. And so, as an example, a robin is usually considered a more “typical” bird than a duck.¹⁷

Psychological descriptions of categorization that emphasize visual cues and sensorimotor relationships may be convincing when referring to inanimate objects (especially tools) and non-human animals, but when it comes to looking at how people divide each other into categories, the situation is even more complex. With people, visual cues often do not provide the kind of information that would facilitate the categorization of human beings.¹⁸ As a result, more abstract criteria may be used to divide people into categories. According to some theories of categorization, it is more than visual cues and perception that leads to the formation of categories; rather, people also classify things based on underlying principles, which subjects organize to form theories about the relationship between members of a particular category.

One theory-based way to categorize, some cognitive psychologists argue, is by positing *natural kinds*. Natural kinds are objects (plants, animals, substances) that are thought “to possess underlying essences that make one category different from another.”¹⁹ It is not the functions that objects serve that distinguish one category from another (objects distinguished in this way would be “artifacts,” such as the chair example above), but a deeper “something,” an essence, that makes an object a member of a particular category. Natural kinds are thought to be unalterable and possess “inductive potential,” that is they “allow one ‘to go beyond the information given’” and induce “a potentially infinite amount of information about an exemplar.”²⁰ Myron Rothbart and Majorie Taylor explain “inductive potential” this way:

...when an object is categorized as a tiger, we expect the object to have the appearance of other tigers, but also to have a similar habitat, method of hunting, caring for its young, life expectancy, and internal body structure. Many of the features shared by the exemplars of a natural kind category are not immediately obvious, and thus we might also expect that an exemplar of the category tiger will be like other tigers in ways not known by most people (such as body temperature).

The ability to impute a number of characteristics to a category member (“exemplar”) is a feature of the essentialism that defines natural kinds. A natural kind is thought to have an underlying “essence” that allows a person to infer a variety of like characteristics that the exemplar and other category members share.

Essentialism

Ethnicity is a social category, yet social categories do not exist in the natural world, nor do they “reflect deep underlying regularities in nature that are stable over time.”²¹ With respect to the “inductive potential” of social categories, from an etic perspective, imputed characteristics often change across time and vary by cultural context, and even the categories themselves may change across time and space. Nevertheless, it would appear as though ethnic groups are “essentialized” in some way, like natural kinds because they are *thought* to be unalterable and possess “inductive potential.”²²

If social categories are human constructions, why is it that ethnic categories—a social category if there ever was one—look more like natural kinds? Lawrence Hirschfeld theorizes that people have an innate propensity²³ to divide the world into “human kinds” meaning that “humans can be partitioned into enduring types on the basis of highly correlated clusters of naturally grounded properties.”²⁴ These human kinds are, according to Hirschfeld, essentialized because people “assume category members are fundamentally alike in their nonobvious and basic natures.”²⁵ Hirschfeld goes on to say that human kinds are:

...any diffuse group of individuals that a person recognizes as being like him in some fundamental and enduring way but whose similarity is not historically traceable to local events (e.g., immediate relationships of kinship). Such groups are not organized around specific states of affairs (e.g., a common activity or instrumental function), or shared sentiment (e.g., a common political or moral perspective). Rather, the level at which this cut is made is determined by a commonsense partitive logic or social ontology that picks out “natural” kinds of people that exist in the world.²⁶

What Hirschfeld calls “race,” and what I would call “ethnicity,” is one of a few different ways in which people perceive human kinds, but it is not the only human kind that exists, according to Hirschfeld. For example, in countries outside of the United States, occupation is seen as a “natural” way of dividing humans.²⁷ People perceive natural kinds when they “naturalize” extant social categories, “conceptually identifying social differences with natural ones.” Along similar lines, Rothbart and Taylor suggest that social groups are seen as natural kinds when category members are thought to possess a common *essence* and “when it is possible to speculate that this essence is related to something like substance, genetic code, innate potential or molecular structure.” At the same time, to attribute something to natural causes is not the same as attributing something to biological causes though, obviously, the two are related.²⁸ To “biologize” is just *one way* of naturalizing categories, but there are other ways. Hirschfeld points to environmental determinism—the

belief that a people's environment affects their character and disposition—as an important way that people have, historically, attributed ethnic differences to “natural” causes.²⁹ In subsequent chapters, I will argue that appeals to the gods or the cosmic order is another way of naturalizing social categories—and ethnic group constructions, in particular.

To explicate natural kinds, it might be beneficial to say more about the idea of “essence” and “essentialism.” There are, according to Hirschfeld and Susan A. Gelman, three main ways in which people conceive of essences. The kind of essentialism relevant to the study of ethnicity and social categories is *causal essentialism*.³⁰ Causal essentialism is a “folk theory,” or “lay theory”³¹—that is, an intuitive thought process through which people posit that outside, observable or superficial properties are *caused by* deeper, internal properties (i.e., their essences).³² In other words, a categorizer posits a causal relationship between a category member's invisible essence and the category in which he or she placed the person, non-human animal, or natural object. Hirschfeld notes, “a category essence is the underlying property (relationship, process, function, etc.) that causes a category member to develop into a sort of thing” and more important, “claims about causal essence are *stories about what causes something to be what it is*.”³³ With regard to inductive potential discussed above, the essence is thought to cause the “potentially infinite amount of information” a person might induce about a category member.

Essentialism is, however, debated within the fields of social psychology and cognitive psychology. There is considerable disagreement about the conceptual components of essentialism. The disagreements seem to revolve around what dimensions are most relevant to essentialism. In other words, is it necessary for people to see a social category as immutable, informative, homogeneous, bounded, etc. for them to perceive that category members share a common essence? In addition, is it necessary for a group to be seen as “natural” to be seen as possessing an essence? We have already encountered the “natural kinds” way of talking about essentialism proposed by Rothbart and Taylor as well as Hirschfeld's “human kinds” notion.

There is another approach within social psychology that connects specific traits such as immutability, inductive potential, coherence and exclusiveness with essentialism. Haslam et al. discuss the different and sometimes contradictory ways in which social psychologists talk about essentialism.³⁴ Haslam and his co-authors divide the ways that social psychologists discuss essentialism into two dimensions. The first corresponds more closely to the notion of natural kinds, which I mentioned in the previous section on categorization. In this sense, essentialized groups are thought to be “sharply bounded, unalterable, and historically persisting matters of a kind, whose members share necessary properties or microstructures” that are thought to either be biological or “naturalized.”³⁵ The second dimension presents social categories as “cohering around an underlying core, and having a homogeneity that makes category membership a rich source of inferences.”

In other words, the first dimension posits that essentialism is defined by assumed natural properties; the second dimension connects essentialism with how groups are seen as “coherent, unified and meaningful entities.”³⁶ This second dimension seems to correspond more closely to a term in social psychology known as entitativity, a term that will be discussed in more detail in the next section.

The conclusions that Haslam and his colleagues draw from their research complicate the theories of natural kinds and human kinds. Rothbart and Taylor emphasize inductive potential in their theory of natural kinds, but according to Haslam and his colleagues, inductive potential does not necessarily imply that the group is seen as “natural.” A group can cohere around a core and can possess inductive potential, but may not be thought of as sharing inherent, historically persistent, natural properties.

For my own perspective on ethnicity, I adopt Hirschfeld’s theory of human kinds. Ethnicity is *thought* to be a natural way of partitioning the social world and ethnic category members are *thought* to share a common, nonobvious essence that causes them to be what they are. I adopt Hirschfeld’s theory because by highlighting both “naturalization” and essentialism, the theory of natural kinds helps explain how ethnicity differs from some other ways of categorizing people. Not all forms of group perception involve naturalization and essentialism, but ethnicity (or “racial thinking”) is notably characterized by them. But even this perspective does not fully distinguish ethnicity from many other group formations. Another interesting finding of Haslam and his colleagues is that ethnicity is not the only social category essentialized in a “naturalistic” way. Haslam and his colleagues pointed out that people with AIDS, people with disabilities, people with mental disorders, and gender are also seen as naturalized, essentialized categories.³⁷ As a result, different criteria are required if we seek to distinguish ethnic groups from these other naturalized, essentialized categories.³⁸

To distinguish ethnicity from other ways in which groups are naturalized and essentialized, I need to highlight another aspect of Hirschfeld’s theory. It is the actual “stories about what causes something to be what it is,” as Hirschfeld put it, that differentiate ethnic groups from other human kinds. It does not appear that a common essence or naturalization, in and of themselves, can distinguish ethnicity—as the research of Haslam et al. suggests. There are a number of social categories that involve naturalized essentialism. With respect to ethnicity, it is *how* people *naturalize* category members that makes the difference. To use language borrowed from Rothbart and Taylor, ethnicity differs from other human kinds with respect to *how* people “speculate that this essence is related to something.” When people are parsed into ethnic categories, the essence that ethnic group members are thought to possess is linked to ethnic group members’ common ancestry and territorial origins. The “speculations” and “stories” that people proffer when they discuss and explain ethnic group essences will involve common ancestry and

common territorial origins. Furthermore, for possible reasons I will explore later, the idea that ethnic group members share common ancestry and territorial origins helps create a believable, cognitively satisfying story that explains the ethnic group's naturalness.

Entitativity

The neologism "entitativity" comes from the field of social psychology, and it is another useful concept for understanding ethnicity as a specific form of group construction. In the 1950s, Donald T. Campbell coined the word to describe the way in which people perceive groups to be real "entities." David Hamilton and his colleagues put it well when they say that "groups are collections of individuals, but not all collections of individuals are groups."³⁹ Perceptions of entitativity consist of the "theories that perceivers hold about specific social groups that endow the groups with social meaning and predictive value."⁴⁰ Campbell suggested that groups can have different levels of perceived "entitativity" and that some groups are seen as more strongly "entitative" than others.

A group may be perceived as more cohesive because group members are thought to share more of a common state of mind or disposition than another group. Marilynn Brewer, et al. developed a taxonomy of entitativity "origin theories," which they define as theories "which provide examples for group behavior and at the same time afford the boundaries and coherence that make the group a social unit." These theories posit that group members share common attributes, common history, common purpose and common fate. Brewer and her colleagues also distinguish between judgments of entitativity based on essence and judgments of entitativity based on agency.⁴¹ The former involves perceived entitativity based on common attributes and the latter on common goals and intentions. Perceived entitativity can be high or low on either basis. Brewer and her colleagues separate essentialism from other ways of seeing groups as entitative. Similarly, Rothbart and Bernadette Park contend that the perception of group entitativity is the result of the interplay of several mental processes. Among those processes are the ascription of common attributes, common goals, common origins, and common intentions to a group as well as the construction of group boundaries.⁴²

Since Campbell, there has been extensive discussion within the field of social psychology about what mental processes actually cause people to see groups as entitative, and the relationship between those mental processes has been a subject of debate. Rothbart and Taylor, for example, believe that groups considered highly entitative are also seen as high with respect to shared attributes but not necessarily high with respect to shared goals.⁴³ Some argue that essentialism is the most fundamental concept of entitativity. Others separate essentialism and entitativity into two distinct

ways of thinking. As I noted above, Haslam and his colleagues seem to believe that essentialism can be separated into a “naturalized” dimension and a “coherence” dimension. There is also debate over whether or not entitativity and essentialism exist in a hierarchical relationship. I certainly am not going to resolve these debates here. The assumption I will make is that essentialism and entitativity are distinct ways of perceiving groups. Entitativity means seeing a group as having coherence, and essentialism means a belief that the group is unalterable and historically persistent, due to an invisible internal essence. Both entitativity and essentialism involve inductive potential, and sometimes they can overlap.

The theory of entitativity helps parse some of the elements of group perception. Many groups are seen to be “entitative” to some extent, but some are seen as more entitative than others for varied reasons. For example, Marines may be seen as highly entitative in a way that is different from the way that ethnic groups are entitative. Though members of the Marine Corps may have the same training, may derive some kind of identity from their membership, may have a common purpose and goals, and may even share customs with other members, “Marines” are not typically thought to be a natural way of partitioning the social world. Rather, it is their common goals, experience, attributes and intentions that make the Marine Corps entitative and give it its predictive value. By contrast, with respect to human kinds, their naturalized putative essence often plays a very large part in the perception of their group cohesion.

Yet even though a human kind, due to its naturalized essence, possess a high level of inductive potential, there are other elements of entitativity that a human kind might not possess—such as homogeneity or common goals. The reverse can also be true. Just because a group is seen to have a high level of entitativity, does not mean that they are thought to have an inalterable essence. Take the human kind, gender, for example. Genders encompass a very large number of people—billions, in fact—from a wide variety of backgrounds. While people may believe a great deal of information can be inferred from one’s gender, “women” and “men” are not typically seen as particularly homogenous. In another example, LGBT people are seen by many religious conservatives as being “promiscuous,” prone to vice (inductive potential, common state of mind) and having a secret political “agenda” (common goals), but religious conservatives often do not see lesbians and gay men as being a “natural” way of partitioning the social world.⁴⁴ LGBTs are definitely seen as an entitative group, even if, to religious conservatives, they do not possess a naturalized essence. Many religious conservatives do not even believe that sexual orientation or trans identity are permanent and enduring. When it comes to ethnicity, I suspect that entitativity can fluctuate. Sometimes, in certain contexts especially one that involves ethnic conflict, an ethnic group may possess many elements of entitativity; other times it may not.

Cognitive psychology, social psychology and ethnicity

The theories of cognitive and social psychology I discussed above help to explain why ethnicity is distinctive and why it is often difficult to separate ethnicity from other kinds of group constructions. All groups are entitative in that they are thought to have attributes that have predictive value (common goals, origins, group boundaries, a naturalized essence, etc.). On the other hand, some groups are characterized by essentialism, a way of perceiving groups that imbues them both with inductive potential and a sense of unalterability and persistence. With respect to ethnic groups, group members are thought to have a deeper essence that causes them to be who they are, and their essences are “naturalized.”

Because ethnic groups are not the only groups characterized by essentialism and naturalization, we need to further clarify what makes an ethnic group a distinct form of group perception. Even when taking into account the perspectives of cognitive and social psychology, it still seems difficult to make convincing theoretical distinctions between terms such as “ethnicity,” “nationalism,” “caste,” etc. Even Hirschfeld blurs lines when he notes that social classes (e.g., servants) can be “racialized” when racial metaphors are used.⁴⁵ To justify the continued use of the terms, “ethnicity,” or “race” requires more. Otherwise, broader terminology, such as “essentialized human categories” or “human kinds” should supplant them.

Hirschfeld recognizes the difficulty in differentiating ethnicity—or “race” as he calls it—from other human kinds. To resolve this difficulty, he distinguishes “race” from other human kinds by claiming that “races” are both seen as self-reproducing and are also seen as inessential to the natural social order. Hirschfeld’s notion of self-reproducing overlaps with what I have referred to as common ancestry. That is, self-reproducing basically means that the status or category is hereditary. With respect to self-reproduction, though, one could argue that caste and social class are also self-reproducing. Recognizing the overlap between caste and “race” with regard to self-reproduction, Hirschfeld additionally proposes that “races” differ from other human kinds because they are “conceptualized as distinct populations whose interrelationships are contingent, not necessary.” Castes and classes may be self-reproducing, but Hirschfeld contends, “society cannot reproduce without these various kinds being locked together in a system of exchange and mutual responsibility.” Race and caste or class overlap in some cases, but:

...typically each race is seen as traceable to an independent population with its own history, its own natural habitat and so forth. Relations of interdependence between races, as the discourse of slavery and its subsequent social forms often stipulate, are historical and often are dismantlable. Even when racial hierarchies have been conceived as the natural order of things...their continued interdependence is not

seen as part of the natural order—slaves *could* have been sent back to Africa, Jews could have been expelled from the Iberian peninsula and so on.⁴⁶

We could quibble with some of Hirschfeld's views here. For example, it is not clear that people always believe that ethnic groups "could" be expelled or sent back to their places of origin. Yet, by attempting to locate the difference between ethnicity and other human kinds in an idea of natural interdependence, Hirschfeld inadvertently touches on the importance of establishing *something* that distinguishes ethnicity from other forms of human categorization. Interestingly, he also suggests that territory is connected to that *something*. He suggests that "race" is connected with a "natural habitat" and that ethnic groups can either be returned to their places of "origin" or expelled from a geographic locale to which they do not "belong." Rather than natural interdependence being the main difference between "race" and other human kinds, I submit that the lack of natural interdependence Hirschfeld perceives is an effect of the relationship between territorial origins and ethnic group conceptualizations.

As Rothbart and Park note, when it comes to categorizing living things, categorizers often "speculate that this essence is related to something like substance, genetic code, innate potential or molecular structure." When it comes to ethnicity, I argue, this speculation posited by Rothbart and Taylor will involve references both to common ancestry and territorial origins. To put it another way, common ancestry and territorial origins are recurring "naturally grounded properties," as Hirschfeld suggests, by which people naturalize ethnic group members' essences. It might seem obvious that common ancestry would become an intuitive way to ground an ethnic group's essence in the "natural." It is less obvious why territory would be a basis by which to do so. In the next section, I will discuss why, perhaps, territory becomes linked to the essences of ethnic group members.

Birds of a feather

A number of theorists of ethnicity recognize that a connection to a territory is often an important component of ethnic group boundaries. Fredrik Barth notes that ethnic boundaries "may have territorial counterparts."⁴⁷ Brubaker mentions that the "territorialization" as well as "the importance of territorial organization and symbolism" can be part of ethnic "dimensions of differentiation."⁴⁸ Carly L. Crouch, a biblical scholar, also sees a role for territory in the construction of ethnic groups. Influenced by Cohen's theories of ethnicity, she notes that:

one of the mechanisms by which a group may facilitate and reinforce its members' shared identity is to establish a degree of spatial

proximity among those members. The most familiar of such efforts is probably the tendency of groups to associate their collective identity with a particular piece of geographic territory.⁴⁹

Crouch contends that Deuteronomistic writers fostered a sense of “spatial proximity,” and group “identity,” through their theology of the land and by promoting centralization of the worship of Yahweh. For these theorists of ethnicity, territoriality is only a possible component of ethnic group conceptualization.

Others, especially those who study nationalism and the formation of the nation state, believe that territory is critical and serves as a distinguishing feature of ethnic group conceptualization. Anthony D. Smith argues, “Members of *ethnies*⁵⁰ usually have a link, sometimes symbolic, with a specific territory to which they are attached and/or from which they believe they originate, but in many cases may be scattered abroad.”⁵¹ Included among Smith’s six essential criteria for ethnic group formation are “the ethnic group must believe in a common ancestry” and the “ethnic group must feel an attachment to a specific territory.”⁵² Zehnder, probably inspired by Smith, states:

Additionally, reference to a designated territory is indeed inextricable for an *ethnie*; this reference, however, should not be linked with its actual existence—it is merely a memory. Furthermore, it is a characteristic of *ethnies* that their “homeland” can change. These factors explain why *ethnies* even in the case of a loss of political control over their region, or even their existence in a diaspora over a long time, can retain their “identity.”⁵³

As Zehnder notes, the fundamental relationship that an ethnic group has with a territory helps explain why some ethnic groups can retain an “identity” even when they lose “their” territory or are otherwise alienated from their territory. Zehnder says that the link that ethnic groups have with a territory is a “memory,” but I would add that the connection with territory is not simply a “memory” (if that “memory” is even based in historical events) but is also part of the abstract speculation about the naturalness of ethnic groups.

Steven Grosby, who weaves the study of modern nationalism with biblical studies, believes that the potency and appeal of modern nationalism builds off of a “primordial” attachment to territory. One has a “primordial attachment to one’s own country, one’s own land, and one’s own way of life.”⁵⁴ In the minds of human beings, territories are inexplicably and inextricably bound with patterns of life. People “participate in patterns of activity which are valid in certain territorial boundaries. Thus territory is not primarily the spatial location of interaction; rather it is in the image of territory that the individual members of the collectivity participate.”⁵⁵ There is a “transcendental” significance of the territory in that it is “the life-ordering and life-sustaining

significance of a space which makes the space into a meaningful structure.”⁵⁶ Grosby admits that he is not sure why people attach this kind of significance to “an environment that is considerably more extensive than that recognized by the relatively more immediate actions of the family and locality, for example, the nation.”⁵⁷ But he suggests that there is some kind of “life-generating, life-determining, and life-ordering power in that which [people] are familiar.”⁵⁸ Grosby further claims that the tendency of people to make territory “familiar” by attaching paternal or maternal imagery to territory with which they identify (e.g., “fatherland,” “motherland”) demonstrates that an attachment to the “familiar” has been fused to the idea of “nation.”⁵⁹

Grosby’s belief that territory holds significance for people because life-ordering social activities take place within territories is a good starting point for explaining why territories become linked with essentialism—though he does not engage the idea of essentialism for his own theorizing. There may be other reasons that territory becomes so easily associated with essences, such as the automatic links people may make between spatial proximity and entitativity. The studies of Robert P. Ableson and his colleagues on group perception found that when test subjects perceived groups of humanoid creatures standing in close physical proximity, their close proximity contributed to the negativity bias towards those groups. Ableson and his colleagues theorized that, “Complex cues to entitativity, such as universal participation in rituals of the group or development of an ideology glorifying group membership, are primarily cognitive, whereas simpler cues such as proximity invoke rapid, automatic perceptual processes.”⁶⁰ Ableson et al. further write:

A partisan propagandist aware (at some level) of the associations between perceived homogeneity, entitativity [Abelson’s spelling], and negative attributions could try to use them to his or her advantage by direct and indirect attempts to persuade the audience that a particular group is homogenous. “Birds of a feather flock together” evokes an image that relies on similarity (being feathered in a characteristic way), but also to the Gestaltist property of proximity and common fate (flocking together).

According to Ableson and his colleagues, when people are thought to be in close spatial proximity, it provokes strong feelings of entitativity—and propagandists may use these sentiments to their own advantage. Here is where the final piece of the enigma that is ethnicity may fall into place. The idea that territorial origins and ancestry go together is based on intuitive links people make between proximity and group cohesion.

Throughout history, people have tied territorial origins to group essences, and this is nowhere clearer than in the tendency of people to come up with explanations for people’s nature and character based on the impact of their environment, as Hirschfeld notes. Writers in both ancient Mesopotamia and

the Greco-Roman world seem to have produced influential texts that relate the nature and character of other peoples to the environment with which they are associated.⁶¹

There is one more thing I would add to my discussion of territory and ethnic group conceptualization. I suspect that the kind of territory that people typically associate with the essences of ethnic group members is what is known as *geographic space*. Scott M. Freundschuh and Max J. Egenhofer, having reviewed theories of spatial cognition in the relatively recent field of cognitive geography, have synthesized a “typology of space” based on properties of manipulability of the space, the size of the space, and normal human locomotion.⁶² Of the six categories of space they identified, two are relevant for my own study of ethnicity: environmental space and geographic space. Environmental space is defined as “non-manipulable, large spaces that require locomotion to experience them,”⁶³ including “inside-of-house spaces, neighborhoods and city size spaces.” These spaces are experienced via normal human locomotion, but in a piecemeal fashion. Geographic space, on the other hand, “covers very large, non-manipulable spaces that due to practical limitations cannot be experienced via locomotion.” These include larger than city-spaces, states, countries and the universe.

Making geographic space the kind of space around which ethnicity is conceptualized allows me to separate smaller kinship concepts such as “tribes,” “bands” from the larger putative kinship concept, “ethnicity.” For systems that divide people into “tribes” or “bands,” environmental spaces, which are smaller and more familiar, might be significant; but for ethnicity, it is geographic spaces that are significant. Consequently, even if popular descriptions or emic categories refer to a group of people as a “tribe,” but members of that “tribe” are thought to share common geographic origins and common ancestry, as far as my admittedly etic outlook is concerned, that so-called “tribe” should be considered an ethnic group anyway. Ancient Israel’s tribal demarcations provide fitting examples of why an emic designation “tribe” can denote, from my perspective, an ethnic designation. From my theoretical viewpoint, the story about an attack by ten Israelite “tribes” (*šibṭê yiśrā’ēl*) on Benjamin, another Israelite tribe, should be classified as a depiction of an ethnic conflict (Judges 20). Because some biblical sources say that the tribes of Israel were given allocations of land that appear to be geographic spaces (e.g., Num 34:18–29; Josh 11:23) and tribes were thought to have descended from a common ancestor, descriptions of “tribal” conflicts within ancient Israel are descriptions of ethnic conflicts—at least in the Priestly and Deuteronomistic traditions. The biblical Hebrew words *šēbeṭ* and *maṭṭeh* are traditionally rendered “tribe,” but from my own theoretical perspective, these words denote smaller “ethnic” units that are nested within a larger ethnic unit. In other words, Israelite “tribal” categories (e.g., Benjaminite, Ephraimite, etc.⁶⁴) are mini-ethnic categories contained within an overarching ethnic category, “Israelite.”

Are the Levites an ethnic group?

The tribe of Levi, placed in charge of maintaining the cult of Israel's God, appears to be a complicated, anomalous case for a few reasons. First, Levites possess cities, scattered among the land allotments of other tribes (Lev 25:32; Num 35:6; Josh 14:3; Joshua 21; 1 Chronicles 6), but not contiguous geographic space like the other tribes. The fact that Levite cities are *scattered* forces us to ask whether the geographic space associated with ethnic categorization needs to be contiguous. Second, some texts use the same language to describe the Levites as other "tribes" of Israel (*maṭṭeh*, *šēbet*), despite their unusual relationship to Israelite land allotment (Num 3:6; 18:2; Deut 10:8; 18:1; Josh 13:14; 18:2–7). Third, though texts define the Levites as a "tribe," the Priestly tradition goes through some lengths to underscore that they are not reckoned (*pqd*) among the other "tribes" of Israel (Num 1:47–49; 2:33). So, are Levites a mini-ethnic group, a term I use to denote the other Israelite tribes? Or is the word "caste" more appropriate? In Chapter One, I noted that distinctions based on work and descent are often associated with "caste," and one major characteristic of the Levites is their relationship with the cult (i.e., their work—Num 1:50–54; 18:3–32).

If ethnicity is understood as a way of categorizing in which common ancestry and common geographic origins are significant, the Levites can be referred to as an ethnic caste. The "spaces" associated with the Levites—cities—are not in themselves geographic spaces, but one could perhaps argue that if we combined the area of the cities, they could be considered geographic space. However, let us assume, for the sake of argument, that scattered cities ought not count as "geographic space." It nevertheless seems clear that Levites are an intrinsic part of a tribal system in which all the other tribes *are* associated with geographic space. Consequently, even if the Levites have no relationship to geographic space themselves, they are included in a system of categorization in which geographic space as well as common ancestry is extremely important.

The depiction of the Levites raises the possibility that not *every single* group within a system of ethnic classification is thought to be bound by both common ancestry and common territorial origins. In some social discourses, the putative common ancestry or common territorial origins of certain ethnic groups can be obscured, unclear, or perhaps even a non-issue. Yet, if a group is clearly included in a classification scheme in which most other groups (or the more prominent groups) are, in fact, divided by common ancestry and common territorial origins, it seems appropriate to consider that group an ethnic group, even if that group's relationship with common ancestry or territorial origins is unclear or nonexistent. In this situation, it would be the group's relationship to an overall ethnic classification system that would make it an "ethnic group." I conjecture

that such a group might be considered a less prototypical ethnic group than the ones for which putative common ancestry and common territorial origins are explicitly articulated. As noted, in some systems of categorization, there are exemplars that are thought to be more prototypical of a category than others (e.g., a robin is considered a more prototypical bird than a duck—see *Categorization* section above). In the case of the Levites, they are a part of the category, “Israelite,” and a part of the tribal system, but some texts do explicitly state that they constitute an atypical tribe (Num 1:47–9; 2:33; 3:40–3). The Levites, then, could be the “ducks” of this particular ethnic classification system. Additionally, the Levites’ unique relationship with work also makes the word “caste,” *in addition to* “ethnic group,” an appropriate label for the Levites.

Landscape: the cultural significance of geographic space

Ethnicity ties ethnic group members’ essences to geographic space, and geographic space is a way of conceptualizing space that all humans may share. But conceptualization of geographic space itself is always mediated by *landscape*, or the cultural meaning that geographic space possesses.⁶⁵ Spaces are replete with cultural meaning, and there are important differences between the meanings people may ascribe to geographic space cross-culturally and even within “cultures.” In the modern world, with satellite imaging and inter-continental travel, geographic space means something very different for a modern person than a person in the ancient world who usually did not travel outside of his or her own hometown. In many modern conceptualizations of geographic space, the world is divided into discrete continents and distinct nation states, each of which has its own unique two-dimensional “shape” that one can visualize mentally. In the ancient world—particularly in ancient Israel and Mesopotamia—mythology played an active part in the way that people conceptualized their geography.

How one conceptualizes geographic spaces through the cultural lens of landscape will play a role in the associations that people make between an ethnic group member’s essence and its association with geographic space. If, for example, one has a worldview that dictates that people on the periphery of the world live in a land of mythological and strange creatures, this may impact the way that peoples who come from those regions are conceptualized.⁶⁶

Variations and forms of ethnicity: nationalism, race and foreignness/alienness

I have argued that ethnicity is a way of categorizing people that essentializes ethnic group members and that naturalizes essences by linking them to ancestry and territory. But ethnicity is a group conceptualization that has

many variations. The terms nationalism, race and foreignness are variations on ethnic group construction. These variations emphasize certain socio-political aspects of ethnicity, and may be limited to certain socio-political contexts. Some variations of ethnicity are products of particular time periods (i.e., “race”) while other variations of ethnicity have been more enduring throughout time.

Nationalism: Nationalism is an ethnic group construction that emphasizes the institutions of the state, which play a central role in disseminating public rituals and laws across a territory that has been demarcated by political borders. Smith argues that, in contrast to members of *ethnies*, members of *nations* are:

united by a distinctive public culture, that is, public rituals and symbolic codes which are disseminated across the territory from one or more centers to members of the community—a process that is usually sponsored by specialized religious, judicial, military or educational elites.⁶⁷

Smith adds that the nations are “territorialized and politicized developments of ethnicity” and that a nation needs territorial, political and legal solidarity among members of the nation.⁶⁸ According to this perspective, nationalism is an ethnic group construction that involves the dissemination of rituals and laws via concrete institutions across a territory. However, even if an ethnic group cannot disseminate rituals and laws across territories, I would say that when people aspire to make this a reality, then this aspiration can be described as “nationalism.” As Thomas H. Eriksen puts it:

A nationalist holds that political boundaries should be coterminous with cultural boundaries, whereas many ethnic groups do not demand control over a state. When the political leaders of an ethnic movement make demands to this effect, the ethnic movement therefore by definition becomes a nationalist movement.⁶⁹

I would add that if the territorial, political and legal solidarity among national group members is imagined, this imagined sense of solidarity plays a critical role in how group members conceptualize themselves.

Race: I agree with a number of anthropologists, sociologists and historians that the idea of “race” is a fairly recent phenomenon.⁷⁰ “Race” categorizes people into intricate taxonomies centered on phenotypes (eye shape, hair texture, skin color, and more recently genetic profile⁷¹). Simply noticing skin color or phenotypic features as part of a suite of differentiation between one particular group and others is not enough to sustain a concept of race. Ancient peoples certainly *noticed* differing skin colors and features, yet it was

not a primary organizing principle by which to parse ethnic groups.⁷² In addition, skin color was not a basis by which to establish ethnic hierarchies.

Race represents the supremacy of empiricism in the modern world and constitutes an attempt to “scientifically” classify people. With the discovery of DNA, genetics have become extraordinarily important in concepts of race, especially in the twenty-first century. But race is clearly a variation on ethnicity as I define it because common ancestry (now explained by genetics) and geographic space (“black” = “sub-Saharan” Africa; “white” = Europe⁷³) are very relevant. The significance of appearance when it comes to race demonstrates that while common ancestry and territory are present in all conceptualizations of ethnicity, they may not always be the *most important* themes in all ethnic group conceptualizations. It could be argued that, in the United States at least, skin color is more important than territorial origins as a way of conceptualizing race.

Foreignness and strangeness: I use foreignness to describe the perception that a person or object is in a space in which it does not “belong.” The concept of “strangeness” or the “stranger,” may also communicate the idea of foreignness, though strangeness can also denote general unfamiliarity, something out of the ordinary, or something that “does not belong.” The idea of the strange and the idea of the foreign overlap, but I differentiate the latter from the former, conceptually. Despite my attempts to make this distinction, the actual words for “strange” and “foreign” might not neatly distinguish between strangeness and foreignness—something we will observe with the biblical text.

When it comes to people, foreignness can be associated with environmental and geographic spaces. A person is a “foreigner” if he or she is thought to be in an environmental or geographic space to which that person does not “belong.” The reason that the person may not belong can vary, which makes “belongingness” (for a lack of a better word) context dependent—i.e., a person’s “belongingness” to a space is a “social construction.” There are also, it appears, degrees in the perception of foreignness. It may be that the person does not belong because he or she does not live permanently in the geographic space. The person may not belong because he or she is not a fully enfranchized participant in the social institutions that operate in and are identified with that environmental or geographic space (e.g., he or she is not a “citizen” or official “resident”). The level of access that someone may have to social institutions also varies, which can affect the perception of a person’s “foreignness.” In the United States, a “green card,” which makes someone a legal permanent resident, provides a foreign-born person with a higher level of access to American social institutions than, say, a temporary work permit. In the US, undocumented immigrants are, perhaps, seen as the most “foreign” of all immigrants because they have little access to American social institutions and indeed many so-called “native-born” Americans assert that undocumented

immigrants illegitimately participate in American society. Alternatively, a person may not belong to a geographic or environmental space because he or she is not considered a “native,” who was “born and raised” in that particular space. A deeply negative emotional reaction to those who are thought to not belong in a particular geographic space is “xenophobia.” Just because a negative reaction to foreigners can be understood as xenophobia and not ethnic bigotry does not necessarily mean that the marginalization of the foreigner will be less acute.

Not all concepts of foreignness and xenophobia should be understood as expressions of ethnicity. A concept of foreignness can be described as ethnic foreignness when common ancestry becomes a conspicuous part of the discourse about foreigners. Sometimes a person can come from outside of a designated geographic space and be considered “foreign,” but his or her foreignness may not be related to common ancestry. For example, if a white French person were to move to the United States, that French person will probably be thought of simply as a foreigner. The French person would probably not, however, be considered an “ethnic” foreigner because of the significance of the concept of race in North America. Consequently, a white French person shares putative “common ancestry” with white Americans (i.e., European “ancestry”). Language and accent may mark the French person as foreign, but skin color and physical appearance would mark the French person as ethnically white. This is not to say, however that there will be no stereotyping associated with the foreigner. The characters Pepe Le Pew, Jacques Clouseau and other popular portrayals of French types (e.g., the angry French chef) show that long-standing stereotypes adhere to certain foreigners.

Foreignness is only “ethnic” when it is connected to the idea that members of the foreign group share a common ancestry, according to the relevant constructions of ancestry in that social context. The foreignness of peoples from Latin America in the US does frequently take on an ethnic tone because their foreignness is often connected with the concept of race. The language difference exacerbates the perception of foreignness and the (perceived) skin color and physical differences play into concepts of race. When assessing concepts of foreignness, it is important to look at whether the rhetoric of common ancestry manifests when foreignness is mentioned. If rhetoric that can be understood as positing that group members share a common ancestry is used, then the concept of foreignness should be understood as ethnic foreignness.

Communication, ethnicity and the Bible

As I have argued that ethnicity differs from other group conceptualizations because discourse about ethnic group members’ essences involves positing that the ethnic group members share common ancestry and territorial

origins. Thus, ethnicity would be most perceptible when people talk about ethnic group conceptualizations. This abstract speculation may not always be perceptible at the experimental level. In fact, many of the studies I surveyed simply assume that there is such a category “ethnic group” or uses common ethnic appellations (see the study of Haslam et al., which assumes a category “blacks”). At the basic, cognitive level, an experimenter might be able to detect causal essentialism and entitativity but these concepts alone do not seem to tell us what makes ethnic groups distinct from other categories in which members have been essentialized and naturalized, such as “class” or even gender, since gender too is essentialized.⁷⁴ Rather, the only way to access the associations that people make between group members’ essences and common ancestry and territorial origins is to engage their culturally informed ideas—and these ideas would be expressed when someone communicates about ethnic group perception. I would also surmise that one might encounter this kind of speculation most commonly in forms of communication that express conscious, deliberate reflection on a subject (also known as *off-line reasoning*⁷⁵). It is these forms of “off-line” communication that are most likely to present explicit terminology and ideas about the fact that common ancestry and common territorial origins are thought to be connected to group members’ essences. In addition, institutions that have the power to produce influential ideas, especially the state, might be very interested in communicating and articulating ethnic group concepts into “formalized, codified, objectified systems of categorization.”⁷⁶

Many psychological studies have shown that stereotypes and characterizations of out-group members become more rigid and less nuanced when they are communicated to others.⁷⁷ That is, when a person hears information about out-group members, that person will relate the information to other people in a “less detailed, more concise and less qualified” way.⁷⁸ Other studies have found that the communication of stereotypes can even have an effect on how a person will process observed information about group members.⁷⁹ As Eriksen notes, “stereotypes help the individual to create order in an otherwise excruciatingly complicated social universe. They make it possible to divide the social world into kinds of people, and they provide simple criteria for such classification.”⁸⁰ When someone is exposed to communicated, abstract stereotypes about out-group members, even when he or she observes counterfactual behavior exhibited by out-group members, that observation often does not shake the stereotype. Communication, then, has immense power to shape perspectives and influence how a person sees members of putative groups.⁸¹ On the other hand, when people communicate about out-group members, their speech and texts may paint a portrait of out-group members that differs substantially from their quotidian interactions with members of the out-group.⁸² I suspect this disjunction manifests itself even more acutely when looking at texts and speech that reflect conscious, deliberative reflection on out-group members. It would appear as though communication about

ethnic groups certainly has an effect, but its effect is not absolute. In many instances, people may adopt a negotiated relationship with stereotypes and ideologies associated with discourse about ethnic groups. Perhaps one might rationalize that a certain group of outsiders are "exceptions to the rule" or that under certain circumstances, especially interpersonal interaction, those individuals with whom one has interacted represent the "good kind" of outsiders, whereas the vast majority conform to the stereotype.

Not every reference to an ethnic group will reveal the relationship between putative essences and common ancestry and territorial origins. In the context of everyday interaction, ethnic group conceptualizations may look very similar to other kinds of group conceptualization because socially specific issues such as access to resources, housing, education, crime and jobs may dominate ethnic conflicts. References to common ancestry and territorial origins may recede to the background of communication, since other, more salient social issues may be more pressing when people communicate their ethnic group perceptions. It is not so much that every single communication about an ethnic group makes a direct reference to this relationship between group members' essences and common ancestry and territorial origins. Rather, these associations would be an observable theme in the communication about the ethnic group. In the United States, for example, the territorial origins of ethnic group members are a frequently recurring theme in official communication about ethnic groups, as evidenced by the reified categories of ethnicity promoted by the US Census Bureau or the frequent reference to territorial origins in "politically correct" terminology for ethnic groups (e.g., "African American," "Italian American," "Asian American," etc.). Assessing whether a group formation is an ethnic group is a matter of investigation and a question that must be investigated and debated. One cannot simply assume, from an analytical perspective, that a group formation constitutes an ethnic group until one can establish that common ancestry and common territorial origins are an observable theme when discussing the group.

Obviously, the power that communication has to shape group perception is something that people would be interested in harnessing and using to their advantage. Elites would probably have a special interest in monopolizing this power. When it comes to the Hebrew Bible, the caricatures of ethnic foreigners that appear in the text constitute an attempt by biblical authors to shape the outlook of readers toward ethnic foreigners. It is difficult to say how effective their intervention in the discourse might have been, but judging from the fact that the theme of ethnic foreigners recurs repeatedly in the Bible I would suggest that the writers believed their strong intervention was necessary. As Dermot Anthony Nestor puts it, biblical writers (and Nestor singles out Deuteronomy) were engaged in a "battle to draw a line between what is questioned and the field of *doxa* [ideas taken for granted]."⁸³ They have designated themselves "authorized personnel" who defend categories and cultural idioms that render social world interpretable and "natural."

As I will show in Chapters Five and Six, biblical writers presented certain ethnic foreigners, such as Canaanites, as abstract stereotypes. In communicating these abstract stereotypes, the writers of these texts were attempting to shape the outlook of their audience and affect their behavior with respect to foreigners.

In arguing that portrayals of foreigners in the Hebrew Bible are in fact portrayals of *ethnic* groups, I problematize the idea, occasionally expressed in biblical scholarship, that biblical conceptualizations of Israelite “identity” are more “religious” than ethnic. Some contend that the most important criteria for membership in the community of Israel was “one’s status with respect to Yahweh” and that “religious identity rather than ethnic identity turns out to be the most important issue for the authors of the Hebrew Bible.”⁸⁴ For these interpreters, the “ethnic sentiments” in the Hebrew Bible are “more rhetorical than actual” which explains why foreigners were (in their reading) easily assimilated. In this interpretation, “religious identity had almost totally supplanted the role of ethnicity in defining group identity.”⁸⁵ By contrast, I argue that biblical authors are fully implicated in constructing ethnic groups. The negative portrayal of foreigners’ religious practices is an intrinsic part of stereotyping formulae and differentiating rhetoric that reinforce the concepts of ethnicity found in the text.

The relevance of a theory of ethnicity for the study of ethnicity in antiquity

I believe that both cognitive psychology and social psychology add a new dimension and richness to humanistic theories of ethnicity, and can help us describe what we mean when we use the hazy language of “the Other” or “primordial attachments.” For example, the insights of Ableson and his colleagues support Grosby’s idea that territory takes on a “transcendental” significance. They (and others) show that spatial proximity is intuitively linked to in-group/out-group bias, and so it reinforces the emotional appeal of ethnic sentiment and its sense of “naturalness.”

The theoretical proposals laid out in this chapter serve as my own starting point for assessing ethnic concepts in antiquity. One can debate what terminology, concepts and ideas denote “common ancestry” and “common territorial origins.” Is familial language (the language of “son,” “brother,” etc.) enough to establish whether a writer is expressing an ethnic conceptualization or not? Do these terms necessarily suggest that those considered “brothers” and “sons” should be seen as people who shared a common ancestry, as it is with many Sumerian and Akkadian texts, which identify residents of a particular city or country as a “son of GN” (e.g., **dumu Sippar**, *mār Aššur*)? This can and should be a subject of debate and argument. In this book, I make my own arguments about what biblical and Mesopotamian terminology communicates common ancestry and common territorial origins. For

example, if a biblical Hebrew word such as *zera'* ("seed"; Akkadian: *zēru*; Sumerian: **numun**), which in numerous contexts refers to ancestry, is used in texts that describe foreigners, it probably demonstrates that the writers believed that these foreigners descended from common ancestors. Scholars can also debate how the cultural notions of landscape that might be present in ancient texts affect the ways ancient writers conceptualized foreigners.

This schema also imposes some parameters on "ethnicity." Whether a concept of ethnicity exists in an ancient text is dependent on the presence of terminology and vocabulary that credibly refer to ancestry and territorial origins. If the evidence is not present, an interpreter may have to concede that there is not enough proof that an author or source conceptualizes the out-group or in-group portrayed in the text as an ethnic group. In these instances, the author may have to find another term for the particular in-group/out-group conceptualization communicated by the text. In some cases, "xenophobia" or "foreignness" may suffice, since as I note above not all concepts of foreignness are concepts of ethnic foreignness. Because of the influence of Deuteronomistic and Holiness ideology on other biblical writers, I will always *suspect* that there is a concept of ethnicity in play when any biblical text discusses foreigners. Nevertheless, without distinctive vocabulary linking groups to both common ancestry and common territorial origins, with respect to certain biblical texts, some suspicions may have to remain mere suspicions.

What *is* ethnicity?

Ethnicity, as a way of categorizing humans, "is" a lot of things. Ethnicity "is" a perspective on the world. Ethnicity "is" the myriad of cultural traits that a system of ethnic categorization can deem relevant to ethnic boundaries, such as dress, language, dietary customs, religion, etc. Ethnicity "is" a way of categorizing that involves entitativity, essentialism and the naturalization of essences. Ethnicity "is" perceived to be enduring and stable, even though it is fluid and changing. Because ethnicity "is," or can be, so many variegated things—some of which overlap with other systems of categorizing people—we should emphasize what possibly *differentiates* ethnicity. Ethnicity differs from other ways of categorizing people because both common ancestry and common territorial origins are notable and significant elements of an ethnic classification scheme.

The extensive overlap between ethnicity and other ways of categorizing people partially explains why it has become so difficult to distinguish ethnicity. For instance, many different kinds of human groupings are thought to possess inductive potential, as discussed above. I identify the sense of "us-and-them" that appears to underlie all ways of categorizing people with what social psychological literature calls entitativity. Entitativity imbues aggregates of people with social meaning; it turns collections of people into

groups whose inductive potential stimulates responses and actions from those who perceive those groups.

Some have looked to essentialism and naturalization to explain ethnicity. Based on the conclusions of Haslam and his co-researchers, however, there are many naturalized and essentialized human categories—including people with HIV/AIDS, gender, mental disorders, disabilities and in some instances LGBT people. Because a large number of group conceptualizations involve essentialism and naturalization to some extent, neither essentialism nor naturalization clearly set ethnicity apart from other ways of categorizing people.

For ethnicity, both common ancestry and common territorial origins will play a role in “naturalizing” the essence of group members. They are conspicuous themes in the “stories about what causes something to be what it is” (Hirschfeld) and when people connect group members’ essences to natural phenomena (Rothbart and Taylor). Consequently, references to common ancestry and common territorial origins convincingly ground the perceived inherence, historical persistence and naturalness of ethnic groups in a cognitively satisfying way. These references are most easily perceived when common ancestry and common territorial origins appear as noticeable themes in conscious, deliberative communication about ethnic groups. Some have argued that a belief that ethnic group members share a common history or common experiences also plays a major role in ethnicity.⁸⁶ This is probably true in most instances, because historical narratives or cultural memories are compelling and effective ways to tie the essence of group members to common ancestry and territorial origins. An ethnic group’s putative history might not entirely revolve around explaining the common ancestry and territorial origins of the group, but these two themes would be conspicuous among the varied narratives that constitute the ethnic group’s common “history.”

While I differ with some colleagues in biblical studies on the definition of ethnicity, they have highlighted some important aspects of ethnicity that should be reiterated. First, essentialism is a necessary component of ethnicity. Second, and perhaps more important, as Buell puts it, one can speak of a “spectrum running from fixity to fluidity” with respect to ethnicity. This spectrum is a function of the fact that from a sociological perspective, ethnicity is fluid, but participants see it as fixed and natural, as Brubaker and his colleagues have noted. It may also be a consequence of the fact that official, formal categories, or even a person’s abstract conceptualization of ethnic groups may differ from that person’s actual treatment of ethnic group members on an interpersonal level.

The following chapters will assess textual media from Mesopotamia and ancient Israel for their communication about ethnic group boundaries. The evidence shows that there were, in fact, concepts of ethnicity in Mesopotamia and ancient Israel. In addition, I observe other aspects of entitativity that Mesopotamian and biblical authors attached to various ethnic groups. The recurring themes and persistence of certain tropes suggests an attempt on

the part of these writers to shape the perspective of readers about these foreigners. Reading between the lines of many of the texts, one can also surmise that what was going on, pragmatically, on the ground was very different from the stereotyped impressions given by the authors of these texts.

Notes

- 1 Chapter One, p. 8.
- 2 Caroline Johnson Hodge, *If Sons, Then Heirs: A Study of Kinship and Ethnicity in the Letters of Paul* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 21.
- 3 Ibid.
- 4 Eric Barreto, *Ethnic Negotiations: The Function of Race and Ethnicity in Acts 16* (WUNT 294; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010), 19.
- 5 Ibid., 20, 28.
- 6 Denise K. Buell, *Why This New Race: Ethnic Reasoning in Early Christianity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 40. Emphasis original.
- 7 Miles Hewstone, Mark Rubin, and Hazel Willis, "Intergroup Bias," *Annual Review of Psychology* 53 (2002): 594.
- 8 One of the ways of imagining how the organization of "groups" might work in concrete social situations has been provided by Ann Swidler, who argues that cultural symbols (of which representations of certain "groups" would be one) are instantiated in what she calls "strategies of action." "Strategies of action" are "persistent ways of organizing action through time" which can be oriented towards any variety of life goals (possibly an infinite number). Swidler points to the curious fact that "strategies of action" can persist through time even when the putative values and ends of a particular action have changed. As a result, Swidler is not concerned with culturally inscribed "values" or "ends" but argues that people "construct chains of action beginning with at least some prefabricated links. Culture influences action through the shape and organization of those links, not by determining the ends to which they are put." In other words, cultural symbols do not implant "values" and "ends" in the heads of agents towards which these agents orient their action. Rather, "publicly available meanings facilitate certain patterns of action, making them readily available, while discouraging others." Obviously, publicly available meanings would not be the only relevant meanings, but publicly available meanings can "facilitate" certain strategies and make other strategies more difficult. See Ann Swidler, "Culture in Action: Symbols and Strategies," *American Sociological Review* 51 (1986): 273–86, 277.
- 9 For bibliography, see Chapter One, nn. 16–18.
- 10 My view differs slightly from Brubaker and Cooper who seem to hold that "groups" only exist in a concrete social context (e.g., institutionalized or entrenched in administrative routines, limiting access to resources, etc.) ("Ethnicity without Groups," 12). "Groups" can exist mentally or imaginatively in an imaginary social context as well, though I agree that one should make a distinction between the mental conceptualization of groups and the instantiation of group perception in concrete social contexts.
- 11 Rogers Brubaker, "Beyond Identity," *Theory and Society* 29 (2000): 2.

- 12 Paul DiMaggio and Hazel R. Markus, "Culture and Social Psychology: Converging Perspectives," *Social Psychology Quarterly* 73 (2010): 349.
- 13 Jon L. Berquist, "Constructions of Identity in Postcolonial Yehud" in *Judah and Judeans in the Persian Period* (ed. Oded Lipschitz and Manfred Oeming; Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2006), 58.
- 14 Henri Tajfel, "Experiments in Intergroup Discrimination," *Scientific American* 223 (1970): 96–102, 98–9. Tajfel's experiments are referred to as "minimal group" experiments and have been replicated many times. See Michael A. Hogg, "Intergroup Relations," in *Handbook of Social Psychology* (ed. John Delmater; New York: Kluwer Academic/Plenum, 2003), 483.
- 15 See my critique of "the other" in Chapter One and Lawrence Hirschfeld's criticism of the tendency within psychology to see race as "simply one of the salient dimensions along which an individual might form an image of himself or another individual" and "as an element of an individual's personal identity," *Race in the Making: Cognition, Culture and the Child's Construction of Human Kinds* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1996), 27–30.
- 16 Eleanor Rosch, "Principles of Categorization," in *Cognition and Categorization* (ed. Eleanor Rosch and Barbara B. Lloyd; Hillsdale, N.J.: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1978), 29.
- 17 There is some debate over the role that prototypes and exemplars play in the formation of categories. Prototypes are abstract criteria for category membership by which category members are judged, whereas exemplars are known instances of category members stored in memory by which category members are judged. The debate over whether prototypical reasoning or exemplar reasoning are central in categorization has not been resolved. See discussion in Craig McGarty, *Categorization in Social Psychology* (Thousand Oaks, Calif.: SAGE, 1999), 32–9.
- 18 Bernadette Park and Reid Hastie, "The Perception of Variability in Category Development: Instance- Versus Abstraction-Based Stereotypes," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 53 (1987): 621–35; Gregory Murphy and Douglas L. Medin, "The Role of Theories in Conceptual Coherence," *Psychological Review* 92 (1985): 289–317; McGarty, *Categorization*, 39–40.
- 19 Myron Rothbart and Majorie Taylor, "Category Labels and Social Reality: Do We View Social Categories as Natural Kinds?" in *Language, Interaction and Social Cognition* (ed. Gün Semin and Klaus Fiedler; London: SAGE, 1992), 12. Rothbart and Taylor are drawing from the Frank Keil's famous distinction between natural kinds and human artifacts. According to this theory, there are objects that are independent of the behaviors and beliefs of humans (natural kinds) and objects that reflect human needs and desires (artifacts). Frank C. Keil, "The Acquisition of Natural Kind and Artifact Terms," in *Conceptual Change* (ed. A. Marrar and W. Demopoulos; Norwood, N.J.: Ablex Publishing Corp, 1986), 133–53.
- 20 Rothbart and Taylor, "Category Labels," 13.
- 21 *Ibid.*, 22.
- 22 *Ibid.*, 20–2.
- 23 Hirschfeld, *Race*, 20. Hirschfeld argues that the propensity to parse human kinds is domain-specific knowledge, a product of a "special-purpose cognitive faculty" that humans have developed (*Race*, 63–81). An extensive discussion of the debate between those who propose a modulated human mind, with special purpose cognitive faculties and those who theorize that humans possess a general-purpose mind

is beyond the scope of this book. Resolving this debate is also well beyond my level of competency. Because many of the psychologists I cite assume a modular mind, this will be my own assumption—though I do not believe coming down on one side of the issue or the other affects my general argument. For an alternative to “massive modularity” theory see David J. Buller and Valerie Gray Hardcastle, “Evolutionary Psychology and Neurobiology: Against Promiscuous Modularity,” *Brain and Mind* 1 (2000): 307–25; David J. Buller, *Adapting Minds: Evolutionary Psychology and the Persistent Quest for Human Nature* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2005), 51, 59–61.

- 24 Hirschfeld, *Race*, 38. Hirschfeld, against some cognitive psychologists who suggest that folk biology (i.e., the creation of “animal kinds” or different “species” in the mind) and “racial thinking” (i.e., the creation of “human kinds”) are analogically related, argues that “racial thinking” is not the same as folk biology, even if the same cognitive processes inspire both:

I propose that young children’s racial thinking is organized around the same biases to prefer certain kinds of explanations over others (organized around the same mode of construal) that are embodied in naive biology. Thus, what naive biology and racial thinking share is not a commitment to a morphologically derived ontology but a common instantiation of an essentialist pattern of causal reasoning. In the case of racial thinking, this pattern of reasoning seems to enable (rather than derive from) an expectation that humans are biologically clustered (*ibid.*, 119).

Because “racial thinking” is a highly inaccurate predictor of biological realities both in a nonobvious way and even at the level of observable physical characteristics, Hirschfeld insists that intuitive biological principles have not been transferred to social groups. Pointing to experiments with children, Hirschfeld argues that:

Folk genera, the basic level of biological taxonomies, are marked by highly correlated clusters of features...For racial categories, in contrast, there is little correlation among features...the structure of the environment does not deliver racial categories as readily as cultural intuitions imagine, nor does the environment deliver them as readily as it does biological species (*ibid.*, 117).

For the argument that folk biology and “human kinds”/“ethnicity” are related, see Francisco Gil-White, “Are Ethnic Groups a Biological ‘Species’ to the Human Brain? Essentialism in our Cognition of Some Social Categories,” *Current Anthropology* 42 (2001): 515–54.

- 25 Hirschfeld, *Race*, 13.
 26 *Ibid.*, 20.
 27 Hirschfeld writes that in many cultures, “occupation is a naturalized category linked to a causally potent politics of identity.” *Ibid.*, 26. Hirschfeld also contends that there are a wide range of human kinds, based on common behavioral features, common physical features and common emotional dispositions. See *ibid.*, 13.
 28 *Ibid.*, 35. See also n. 24.
 29 *Ibid.*, 52.
 30 The other two, according to Susan A. Gelman and Hirschfeld are *sortal* and *ideal*. See Susan A. Gelman and Lawrence A. Hirschfeld, “How Biological is Essentialism?” in *Folkbiology* (ed. S. Medin and S. Atran; Cambridge: MIT Press,

- 1999), 403–46. Sortal essentialism is related to the properties that a category member possesses. “Meaning (or identity) is supplied by a set of necessary and sufficient features that determine whether an entity does or does not belong in a category” (405). Ideal essentialism relates to abstract ideas such as “goodness” (406).
- 31 For Hirschfeld’s summary of lay theories, see his article, “On a Folk Theory of Society: Children, Evolution and Mental Representations of Social Groups,” *Personality and Social Psychology Review* 5 (2001): 107–17, esp. 108. See also Ying-Yi Hong, Sheri R. Levy, and Chi-yue Chu, “Contribution to the Lay Theories Approach to the Study of Groups,” *Personality and Social Psychology Review* 5 (2001): 98–106.
- 32 For a classic statement of “psychological essentialism,” see Douglas L. Medin and Andrew Ortony, “Psychological Essentialism,” in *Similarity and Analogical Reasoning* (ed. S. Vosniadou and Andrew Ortony; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 179–96. A good summary of what a “folk theory” is can be found in Jason E. Plak et al., “In the Eye of the Beholder: Lay Theories and the Perception of Group Entitativity, Variability and Essence,” in *The Psychology of Group Perception: Perceived Variability, Entitativity, and Essentialism* (ed. Vincent Yzerbyt, Charles M. Judd, and Olivier Corneille; New York: Psychology Press, 2004), 97. Major features of lay or folk theories are that they “(a) lack the rigor of scientific theories, and (b) people are not necessarily able to articulate their theories or appreciate the impact of their theories on their social understanding...they tend to operate in the background...[and] provide crucial constraints on the potentially limitless ways that incoming information might be interpreted and encoded.”
- 33 Hirschfeld, *Race*, 54. Emphasis added.
- 34 Nick Haslam, Louis Rothschild, and Donald Ernst, “Essentialist Beliefs about Social Categories,” *British Journal of Social Psychology* 39 (2000): 115–6. It is hard to tell how Haslam, Rothschild and Ernst would react to Gelman’s and Hirschfeld’s division of essentialism into three types. It appears that some of the properties mentioned by Haslam, Rothschild and Ernst that belong to the “second dimension” of essentialism also fall under *sortal* and *ideal* forms of essentialism.
- 35 *Ibid.*, 120.
- 36 *Ibid.*
- 37 *Ibid.*, 123. Haslam et al., conducted an experiment with the goal of finding out which elements of essentialism, outlined by the theoretical traditions of social psychology were “most central.” They contend that *natural kinds* are a particular kind of essentialism. These categories were thought to be “immutable, natural, historically invariant, sharply bounded and underpinned by necessary or defining features.” Race, ethnic groups and gender, unsurprisingly, scored very high on a “natural kinds” dimension. On the other hand, other categories (e.g., diseases like HIV/AIDS) can also be naturalized because the disease is said to have a biological component. See “Essentialist Beliefs,” 113–27. See also another article by the same authors, “Essentialism and Entitativity: Structures of Beliefs about the Ontology of Social Categories,” in Yzerbyt, Judd and Corneille, *Psychology of Group Perception*, 61. Other research conducted by Haslam and his colleagues suggests that some social divisions, such as sexual orientation require a “more differentiated belief structure.” In some instances, homosexuality was naturalized and in other instances it was simply seen as historically persistent and coherent.

- 38 See discussion in Dermott A. Nestor, *Cognitive Perspectives on Israelite Identity* (New York: T&T Clark, 2010), 108. Against Gil-White, who contends that ethnicity is like a biological kind because of its descent-based membership, Nestor argues that "...under the appropriate *social conditions*, essentialism can take place at the dyadic, gender, caste, national and ethnic level. If we need to look for an explanation outside of normative endogamy and descent-based membership to account for the documented essentializing of caste and gender, then perhaps we need to look elsewhere to explain the essentializing of ethnic groups as well."
- 39 David Hamilton, Steven L. Sherman, and Julie S. Rodgers, "Perceiving the Groupness of Groups: Entitativity, Homogeneity, Essentialism, and Stereotypes," in Yzerbyt et al., *Psychology of Group Perception*, 33.
- 40 Marilyn Brewer, Ying-Yi Hong, and Qiong Li, "Dynamic Entitativity: Perceiving Groups as Actors," in Yzerbyt, Judd, and Corneille, *Psychology of Group Perception*, 19–29.
- 41 Ibid., 22.
- 42 Myron Rothbart and Bernadette Park, "Mental Representation of Social Categories," in Yzerbyt et al., *Psychology of Group Perception*, 60–76, especially discussion on 67–8.
- 43 Ibid., 69.
- 44 See n. 37.
- 45 Hirschfeld, *Race*, 49, 80.
- 46 Ibid., 198.
- 47 Fredrik Barth, "Introduction," in *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: The Organization of Culture Difference* (ed. Fredrik Barth; London: Allen & Unwin), 15.
- 48 Rogers Brubaker, Mara Loveman, Peter Stamatov, "Ethnicity as Cognition," *Theory and Society* 33 (2004): 48.
- 49 Carly L. Crouch, *The Making of Israel: Cultural Diversity in the Southern Levant and the Formation of Ethnic Identity in Deuteronomy* (VTSup 162; Leiden: Brill, 2014), 133.
- 50 For Smith *ethnies* are "named human populations with shared ancestry, myths, histories and cultures, having an association with a specific territory and a sense of solidarity," (*The Ethnic Origins of Nations* [Oxford: Blackwell, 1986], 32). In other words, *ethnie* is Smith's word for "ethnic group." Smith studies modern nationalism, but argues that *ethnies* have existed long before the modern period as a precursor of modern "nations."
- 51 Anthony D. Smith, *The Cultural Foundations of Nations: Hierarchy, Covenant and Republic* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2008), 31.
- 52 Anthony D. Smith, *National Identity* (London: Penguin, 1991), 94. Also see reference to "link to a homeland" in John Hutchinson and Smith, "Introduction," in *Ethnicity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 7.
- 53 "Der Bezug zu einem bestimmten Territorium ist zwar auch für eine Ethnie unabdingbar; dieser Bezug muss aber nicht mit den realen Gegebenheiten der Gegenwart verbunden sein, es reicht eine blosser Erinnerung. Zudem gehört es zu den Eigenarten von Ethnien, dass ihre 'Heimat' auch wechseln kann. Diese Faktoren erklären, weshalb Ethnien auch in Falle des Verlustes der politischen Kontrolle über ihr Gebiet oder sogar der Existenz in der Diaspora über lange Zeiträume ihre Identität bewahren können" (Markus Zehnder, *Umgang mit Fremden in Israel und Assyrien: Ein Beitrag zur Anthropologie des "Fremden" im*

- Licht antiker Quellen* [Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2005], 36 n. 6). My translation. Zehnder does not say from whom he got this idea, but since he uses Smith's word *ethnie* and cites Smith elsewhere (23 n. 2–3, 27 n. 4, 7–8, *et passim*), I assume Smith is his inspiration.
- 54 Steven Grosby, "Territoriality: The Transcendental, Primordial Feature of Modern Societies," *Nations and Nationalism* 1 (1995): 144.
- 55 *Ibid.*, 147.
- 56 *Ibid.*, 148–9.
- 57 Grosby, *Biblical Ideas of Nationality: Ancient and Modern* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2002), 70.
- 58 *Ibid.*
- 59 Steven Grosby, "Territoriality," 151.
- 60 Robert P. Ableson et al., "Perceptions of the Collective Other," *Personality and Social Psychology Review* 2 (1998): 243–50, 247. For other studies showing that proximity is related to perceptions of groups, see Allen H. Ryen and Arnold Kahn, "Effects of Intergroup Orientation on Group Attitudes and Proxemic Behavior," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 31 (1975): 302–10. For a study showing that people tend to express attitudes between social groups in spatial arrangements, see Thomas W. Schubert and Sabine Otten, "Overlap of Self, Ingroup and Outgroup: Pictorial Measures of Self-Categorization," *Self and Identity* 1 (2002): 353–76.
- 61 In the Greek world, the text *Airs, Waters, Places*, which was attributed to Hippocrates was very influential on a number of ancient writers (Plato, Aristotle, Galen and Roman authors) as well as modern writers. *Airs* argues that different climates are responsible for the differences in character and physical form of different peoples. The environment can make physical changes, and once these changes have been made, they become permanent and hereditary. See Benjamin Isaacs, *The Invention of Racism in Classical Antiquity* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2004), 60–76.
- 62 Scott M. Freundschuh and Max J. Egenhofer, "Human Conceptions of Spaces: Implications for Geographic Information Systems," *Transactions in GIS* 2 (1997): 361–75.
- 63 *Ibid.*, 372–3.
- 64 There are actually some Hebrew gentiles associated with tribal origins, such as "Ephraimite" (*'eprāṭī*, Judg 12:5; 1 Sam 1:1; 1 Kgs 11:26), but tribe is most often denoted by the expression *ben-X* (e.g., Num 1:36 *et passim*).
- 65 Social and cultural constructions of space have been highly theorized. Many perspectives on space among biblical scholars have been influenced by the tripartite divisions of space articulated by Edward Soja and Henri Lefebvre (see especially Jon D. Berquist, "Introduction: Critical Spatiality and the Use of Theory"; Mark K. George, "Space and History: Siting Critical Space for Biblical Studies"; Mary R. Huie-Jolly, "Formation of Self in Construction of Space: Lefebvre in Winnicott's Example" in *Constructions of Space I: Theory, Geography and Nature* [ed. Jon D. Berquist and Claudia V. Camp; New York: T&T Clark, 2007], 1–12, 15–31, 51–67). I use the word, "landscape" for the cultural construction of geographic space in lieu of terminology such as "conceived space" and "lived space" (Lefebvre), "Secondspace" and "Thirdspace" (Soja), or "place" (Tuan). While I make a distinction between some intuitive senses of space (based on Freundschuh's

- and Egenhofer's typology), and the cultural meaning of space, I do not intend to create a rigid binary between the two. This bifurcation is my own way of dealing with what Berquist calls the "materiality of space" ("Introduction," 8). By materiality, I mean the something real and physical that human beings experience in their interaction with space. Most humanistic theorists of space recognize that the "biological fact of the animate body in space" and the physical experience of space is critical to theorizing it (Yi-Fi Tuan, "Space and Place: Humanistic Perspective," in *Philosophy in Geography* [ed. Stephen Gale and Gunnar Olsson; Dordrecht: D. Reidel, 1979], 396–402).
- 66 For example, mythological creatures populate the periphery in Herodotus's descriptions of the world. See Francois Hartog, *The Mirror of Herodotus: The Representation of the Other in the Writing of History* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1988), 61–111. See also Chapter Three, 50–4.
 - 67 Smith, *Cultural Foundations*, 31. For a similar view, see also Crouch, *Making of Israel*, 88–90.
 - 68 Smith, *Cultural Foundations*, 32. See also discussion in Crouch, *Making of Israel*, 88–93.
 - 69 Thomas H. Eriksen, *Ethnicity and Nationalism: Anthropological Perspectives* (London: Pluto Press, 1993), 6.
 - 70 Audrey Smedley, "Race and the Construction of Human Identity," *American Anthropologist* 100 (1998): 694–6.
 - 71 See, for example, the *New York Times* editorial by Armand Marie Leroi, "A Family Tree in Every Gene," 14 March, 2005, who represents a growing chorus of biologists who insist that race has some biological basis. This is an extraordinarily contentious issue as identifying a "race" with certain clusters of genetic similarity involves untangling the complicated relationship between social environment and genes. Certainly, the idea that one can infer the kinds of information about intelligence, propensity for violence, sexual desire, genitalia size and other traits according to the classical racial classifications (Caucasian, Negroid, Mongoloid, etc.) cannot be maintained. Scientists are divided about what to do about the problem. Some refer to populations, others use the word cline, while others still see value in the use of "race." For an introduction to the problem, see "The Use of Racial, Ethnic and Ancestral Categories in Human Genetics Research," *American Journal of Human Genetics* 77 (2005): 519–32.
 - 72 For example, Jer 13:23 probably refers to the skin color of Cushites. Neo-Assyrian art also seems to frequently depict Cushites with short, curly hair. For iconographic representations of Cushites, see Esarhaddon's famous Zincirli and Tel Borsip victory stela and the well-known ivory relief of a lion attacking a boy, presumed to be Cushite (Israel Eph'al, "Esarhaddon, Shubria and Egypt: Politics and Propaganda," *JCS* 57 [2005]: 106; J. Oates and D. Oates, *Nimrud: An Assyrian Imperial City Revealed* [London: British School of Archaeology, 2001], 91).
 - 73 Of course, racial classifications are socially constructed and often change. To take a well known example, fairly recently, in the United States, not all people who immigrated from Europe were considered "white." The Irish, Eastern Europeans, Jews, Balkan peoples, etc. were often excluded from the racial category "white." For an example of the history of the Irish in the US, see Noel Ignatiev, *How the Irish Became White* (New York: Routledge, 1995). Ignatiev notes, however, that the

- ideology of “whiteness” gave the Irish more options to aspire to being white than other groups, especially blacks.
- 74 See pp. 25–6 and n. 37.
- 75 The theory of off-line and on-line representation recognizes that concepts often have “multiple levels of representation” in the mind. One researcher, Justin Barrett, who looked at the difference between off-line and on-line reasoning to explain the difference between official theology and popular religious ideas, argues that there is a “theoretical level and the basic level; the level used in formal discourse and careful reflection and the level used on-the-fly to solve problems quickly.” Barrett also claims that the concept that “will be selected in a given context—the basic, intuitive one or the more complex theologically correct one—is largely the result of processing limitations. In on-line thinking tasks requiring quick, efficient solutions to an immediate problem, the basic concept rooted in intuitive knowledge will be employed. In less demanding situations, where slower, more careful reflection is possible, complex, theologically correct concepts are used” (Justin L. Barrett, “Exploring the Natural Foundations of Religion,” *Trends in Cognitive Science* 4 [2000]: 29–34); See also Todd Tremlin, *Minds and Gods: The Cognitive Foundations of Religion* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 172–5, for a good review of on-line/off-line reasoning.
- 76 Brubaker and Cooper, “Beyond Identity,” 15.
- 77 See review in Markus Brauer, Charles M. Judd, and Micah S. Thompson, “The Acquisition, Discussion and Transmission of Social Stereotypes,” in Yzerbyt, Judd and Corneille, *Psychology of Group Perception*, 239.
- 78 Brauer, Judd, and Thompson, “Social Stereotypes,” 241.
- 79 Richard L. Moreland and Jamie G. McMinin, “Entitativity and Social Integration: Managing Beliefs about the Reality of Groups,” in *The Social Psychology of Stereotyping and Group Life* (ed. Russell Spears et al.; Oxford: Blackwell, 1997), 244–54.
- 80 Eriksen, *Ethnicity and Nationalism*, 24.
- 81 *Ibid.*, 22–8.
- 82 Eriksen also points this out when he notes that what people say and what they do often differ (*ibid.*, 24).
- 83 Nestor, *Cognitive Perspectives*, 226. *Doxa*, a term used extensively in the sociology of Pierre Bourdieu (1930–2002), is described as a society’s taken-for-granted, unquestioned beliefs.
- 84 Kenton L. Sparks, *Ethnicity and Identity in Ancient Israel: Prolegomena to the Study of Ethnic Sentiments in the Hebrew Bible* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1998), 264, 312. Sparks does not say what he means by “religion” nor does he unpack the term “religious identity.” See also critique of Crouch, *Making of Israel*, 110–3.
- 85 Sparks, *Ethnicity*, 316.
- 86 See Southwood’s comment in Chapter One, p. 5. See also Hutchinson and Smith, “Introduction,” 6–7.

“BROOD OF DESTRUCTION”

Mesopotamian caricatures of foreigners

In the last chapter, I argued that ethnicity differs from other ways of categorizing people because it is a system of categorization in which common ancestry and common territorial origins (understood as geographic space¹) are conspicuously significant. Yet, there are as many cultural and social conceptualizations of territory and ancestry as there are cultures and societies—and even within societies there will probably be a variety of conceptualizations of territory and ancestry. The perception of geographic space, which seems to be a universal human phenomenon, is expressed through *landscape* or the cultural meaning that people ascribe to the geographic spaces around them. Directions and locations are inscribed with various meanings and landscapes are replete with ideological and political significance. In some conceptualizations of landscape, some territories are placed in binary opposition to one another based on the social and ideological meaning these territories might have (e.g., center/periphery, occident/orient, north/south, near/far, fertile/wilderness). It is also common for landscapes to inscribe territories with a “character” based on their location (e.g., “the Far East,” “the dark continent,” “South of the Border,” the land “down under”). Notions of common ancestry can also be varied, ranging from belief that members of a group descended from a common progenitor to the modern idea that there is some kind of clear, discernible genetic relationship between members of different ethnic groups, to the idea that certain kinds of humans were created by the gods under different circumstances from the rest of humanity (an example that will be shown below).

In this chapter, I will explore some Mesopotamian constructions of foreigners with an eye to how certain Mesopotamian texts view landscape and ancestry as well as the interaction between the two. Mesopotamian concepts of ethnicity are distinctive because Mesopotamian texts tend to emphasize the geographic component of ethnic group perception, rather than the hereditary connectedness between ethnic group members. However, even in Mesopotamian texts, the language used to describe certain ethnic groups shows that, at least in some texts, some groups are thought to have a kind of hereditary connectedness. I theorize that Mesopotamian texts,

as documents produced by literate elites of post-Akkadian states, and the Assyrian and Babylonian empires, are dominated by a political landscape that was attuned to the needs of these imperial societies. In other words, the backdrop of the texts that I will analyze is a cartographic imagination informed by an imperial political division of the world. This imagined view of the physical world represented an ideological construction that made the imperial seat of power and the lands within its immediate orbit the “center” and those lands outside the “periphery.”

Ethnicity in Assyriology

Assyriologists, like other scholars in the humanities, struggle with the term “ethnicity.” Govert van Driel follows Siân Jones’s definition of ethnicity: “all those social and psychological phenomena associated with a culturally constructed group identity” and “the ways in which social and cultural processes are involved in the identification of and interaction between ethnic groups.”² Van Driel goes on to define principal stages of ethnic development and ways in which ethnic groups might be constructed by scholars by looking at traditions, religion, way of life, structure of society and material culture. Van Driel is explicit about the limitations of all of these criteria, but there is a deeper theoretical issue. If ethnicity is fundamentally about *perception*, and is not something “out there” to be discovered, simply looking at traditions, religion, way of life, social structure and material culture will miss this critical piece of information. Some ancient sources of information, such as business, administrative and legal texts as well as material culture, do not easily reveal how ethnic group members are perceived. We would have to look at how traditions, religious practices and ways of life are used *ideologically* in Mesopotamia. If we were to construct ethnic groups based on social practices and structures alone, we might be reinforcing our own ethnic group perceptions, not reconstructing possible ethnic group perceptions that Mesopotamian writers may have had. Certainly, we can speculate that migrations and political changes sparked ethnic conflict. In addition, when texts use gentilics or epithets for foreigners that specify geographic locations (e.g., “Amorite,” “Gutian,” “Elamite”), we can suspect that the peoples denoted by these geographically based gentilics are perceived as ethnic groups. But we should not posit that they are conceptualized as ethnic groups without engaging the ideas Mesopotamian texts or iconography expressed about these foreigners.

Of course, the reconstructions will always be incomplete because the record for the most part has left highly reified, highly stylized descriptions of ethnic groups. In addition, the extant texts from Mesopotamia probably represent a small percentage of texts that were actually produced, and what does exist was found largely through accident of discovery or because the texts happened to be preserved after thousands of years. While the texts that

may have been preserved represent a small percentage of what was actually composed, the sheer volume of extant texts is a related problem. Not only will a scholar's viewpoint be incomplete because not all of the texts from ancient Mesopotamia have been preserved, but because the volume of preserved texts forces one to specialize. Nevertheless, this is where a scholar must start in his or her reconstruction.

One piece of evidence that supports my hypothesis that Mesopotamian texts give more emphasis to geographic distinctions is, perhaps paradoxically, the difficulty that some scholars have in pinpointing a concept of ethnicity in Mesopotamia. The emphasis that Mesopotamian texts place on geographic distinctions seems to have led to the notion that foreign peoples are distinguished based on “behavioral” characteristics or lifestyle (such as urban versus nomadic or civilized versus uncivilized), which is counterposed to distinctions based on ethnic grounds.³

Some Assyriologists claim that ethnicity is difficult to determine in Mesopotamia because the distinctions that people normally make between ethnic groups, especially with respect to language, are not prevalent in Mesopotamia. While there are some texts that might negatively characterize the languages of other peoples,⁴ it is also true that many of the greatest conflicts in Mesopotamia take place between political entities that speak the same language. Christina de Bernardi points out that the earliest recorded conflicts in Mesopotamia take place between Lagaš and Umma, city states whose populations both spoke Sumerian.⁵

However, de Bernardi notes that eventually a distinction between the “center” and “periphery” develops, in which the “center” (**kalam**) or inner country provides subsistence goods such as grain, wool, etc. and the dominated “periphery” (**kur**) provides raw materials.⁶ For de Bernardi, the “center” does indeed seem to possess some kind of ethnic meaning because eventually the **kalam** becomes an “ethnic, political, ecological center that begins to define by opposition a periphery to subordinate”—a periphery that connotes an “environmental outside” and “otherness” that brings the foreignness of its inhabitants into relief.⁷ In earlier texts, it appears as though the **kalam** was understood as the alluvial plain of Mesopotamia, the main cities that participated in the **bala** or temple tax for the shrine at Nippur.⁸ Of course, as time went on, what constituted the “center” and what constituted the “periphery” would change to reflect the location of who was in charge. Note that Assyrian cities are located far to the north of the traditional **kalam**. The new “center” for the Assyrians would become the “land of Assyria” (*māt Aššur*), which obviously revolved around Assyrian cities.

De Bernardi holds that the geographic distinction between center and periphery does seem to give rise to a kind of ethnic thinking, but others are not so sure that a geographic distinction alone can qualify as an ethnic distinction. Zainab Bahrani, who holds that ethnicity is a thoroughly modern concept, does not believe that the foreign peoples negatively characterized

in Mesopotamian texts constitute ethnic groups⁹. For Bahrani, ethnicity is a modern “relationship of alterity” (i.e., a construction of “others”¹⁰) that centers on biology and phenotype. Bahrani claims that the foreignness of peoples in Mesopotamian texts, on the other hand, is expressed spatially and in terms of behavior, but not in biological terms. The texts that portray foreigners such as the Gutians and the Amorites are expressing a relationship of alterity based on a key Mesopotamian distinction between nomadic peoples and urban peoples. Yet, because the texts convey no “biological” distinction, according to Bahrani, these groups cannot be classified as ethnic groups.

Bahrani argues that, for a description to qualify as “biological,” the description should explicitly mention physical characteristics or there should be some evidence that race or ethnicity was a specific, identifiable category in the scientific and medical texts of Mesopotamia. By contrast, for my own theoretical view of ethnicity, any terminology or language suggesting that foreigners are related by genealogical or hereditary links is conceptually analogous to, but certainly not identical to, modern biological concepts. Since some texts do use terms such as “seed” (*zēru*) to describe certain foreigners and because physical characteristics are, indeed, part of the descriptions of foreigners in texts such as the *Cuthean Legend of Naram-Sin* (a text that Bahrani does not mention) as well as the *Curse of Akkad*, I hold that many foreigners negatively characterized in Mesopotamian texts can be classified as ethnic foreigners. Bahrani is correct to emphasize that Mesopotamian texts do not betray complex taxonomies of racial groups as do eighteenth and nineteenth century European concepts of race, nor do they prioritize visual, physical characteristics in depictions of foreigners. Nevertheless, I contend that basic components of ethnic group conceptualization manifest themselves in at least some Mesopotamian characterizations of foreigners.

I take seriously warnings that modern concepts of ethnicity are often unjustifiably read into Mesopotamian texts, but scholars should also be wary of reading their own cartographic concepts into ancient texts. There is no such thing as merely “spatial” or “geographic” divisions in Mesopotamia, especially considering the fact that the distinction “center/periphery” held so much ideological significance. As I will show below, in many Mesopotamian texts, the geographic origins of certain peoples are related to their essential core and their essential character as peoples.

Since some Assyriologists point to nomadism as an important distinction that Mesopotamian texts make to mark “civilized” and “barbarian” peoples, it is important to point out that many so-called nomads are associated with particular regions and that nomads were thought to have settlements. For example, in the *Sargon Geography*, a composite text that was finalized during the Neo-Assyrian period, the “nomadic” Haneans and Subartians are associated by name with the *lands* of Hanu and Subartu.¹¹ The relationship between “nomads” and specific regions suggests a highly geographic

component to Mesopotamian concepts of foreignness—even with respect to “nomads.” However, it would appear as though there is a difference between the gentilics given to “nomads” and the gentilics given to other groups. In the Neo-Assyrian period, the names of nomadic peoples never appear with the determinatives URU or KUR (geographic determinatives), but may appear with LÚ (denoting a “people”), as is the case with LÚ *Tamudi*, an Arab nomadic group, or they may appear with no determinative at all.¹²

The association of nomads with distinct lands may also be a function of the kind of “nomadism” that existed in the ancient Near East.¹³ Groups known for their “nomadic” tendencies in the ancient Near East, such as the Amorites, were also said to have had cities and some were fully integrated into various societies of Mesopotamia.¹⁴ The fact that some so-called “nomads” are associated with settlements and regions makes the hard and fast distinction between “settled” people and the nomads more complicated. Relatedly, Amorites are a “nomadic” group that was said to have founded dynasties in the major states of Mesopotamia. Even though Amorites seem to have been fully integrated into the political and social structures of many Mesopotamian states, in many instances they are still labeled “Amorite,” suggesting that integration may not have erased their social identification as Amorites.

Texts used

Legends about past kings of Akkad,¹⁵ a city state thought to have been the center of world’s first empire from around 2340–2198 BCE, will be where I start my discussion about ethnicity in Mesopotamian texts.¹⁶ There are a number of texts and topics that would be fruitful for a discussion about caricatures of ethnic foreigners in Mesopotamia, such as city laments that mention foreign peoples responsible for the destruction of major Mesopotamian cities, polemical jabs at the social practices of the Amorites, a Western people who infiltrated and settled much of Mesopotamia, the Kassite takeover of Babylonia, the conflicts between Assyria and Babylonia (especially the demonization of Marduk-apla-iddina), Assyrian caricatures of the Elamites and their gods, and so on. And indeed, some of these topics will crop up since they are relevant to my review of the literary tradition of the early kings of Akkad. But stories about the early kings of Akkad seem to have had an extraordinarily wide-reaching impact. Texts about the kings of Akkad have been found as far away as Anatolia and Egypt,¹⁷ and copies of some of the stories have even been discovered in Hittite.¹⁸ Since texts about the early kings of Akkad were known around the ancient Near East, perhaps it is not surprising that the biblical texts may also have been directly influenced by the legends of the kings of Akkad.¹⁹

Though scholars debate whether or not the Akkadian empire was really the first world empire, the scribal tradition that preserves stories about the kings of Akkad certainly suggests that they had accomplished something radically

different from whatever political and social organization came before.²⁰ The rulers of Akkad, namely Sargon, who brought most of Mesopotamia under his rule, and his grandson Naram-Sin became legends in Mesopotamian folklore. It is also very possible that many of the themes in the stories about the early kings of Akkad influenced later ideological representations of foreigners, particularly in Neo-Assyrian texts. As a result, I have chosen to focus on literary texts about the heroic, and sometimes tragic, exploits of Sargon and Naram-Sin, especially the *Curse of Akkad* and the *Cuthean Legend of Naram-Sin*. Of course, other texts will help illuminate some of ways that foreigners are presented in literary texts about the kings of Akkad, and I will look at those texts as they are relevant.

The other set of texts I will be looking at—though not as extensively as the Akkadian legends—are Neo-Assyrian inscriptions. During the Neo-Assyrian empire (919–609 BCE) there was a kind of Akkadian “renaissance” as Neo-Assyrian kings invoked the legacy of the kings of Akkad to legitimate their own regimes.²¹ Neo-Babylonian kings, especially Nebuchadnezzar II (605–562 BCE) and Nabonidus (555–539 BCE), also participated in the tradition of revering and (selectively) remembering the past to legitimate the present. As early as the turn of the last century, Assyriologist Albert T. Clay referred to this nostalgia for the past among rulers of Mesopotamia as “antiquarianism.”²² The scribal tradition of Mesopotamia preserved lore about the kings of Akkad, assuring that these stories would resonate throughout the ages. These kings, their exploits, accomplishments and inscriptions were essential to the training of scribes in Mesopotamia (and, apparently, in places such as Egypt and Hattuša as well), and the texts are a window into one of Mesopotamia’s more influential ideologies. This nostalgic textual tradition developed in the context of a royal antiquarianism in which the kings of Mesopotamian empires collected purported “relics” in museums and preserved and restored ancient cult sites.²³ And, of course, the scribal traditions of Mesopotamia often appealed to the traditions of the sages that came before them.²⁴

Mesopotamian landscapes

Mesopotamian geography, like most ancient geography, is intimately connected with mythology and the gods.²⁵ The introduction to *Lugalbanda in the Mountain Cave*, a story probably composed during the Isin-Larsa/Old-Babylonian period (2000–1600 BCE)²⁶ suggests that the boundaries of the earth and the settled life of Mesopotamia are intimately connected with creation:

When in ancient days heaven was separated from earth, when in ancient days that which was fitting...boundaries were laid out and borders were fixed, when boundary-stones were placed and inscribed with names, when dykes and canals were purified, when...wells were dug straight down; when the bed of the Euphrates, the plenteous

river of Unug [=Uruk], was opened up...when the offices of *en* and king were famously exercised at Unug, when the sceptre and staff of Kulaba were held high in battle—in battle, Inanna’s game; when the black-headed²⁷ were blessed with long life, in their settled ways and in their..., when they presented the mountain goats with pounding hooves and the mountain stags beautiful with their antlers to Enmerkar son of Utu.²⁸

For some Mesopotamian texts, such as the second millennium BCE “creation myth” *Enūma Eliš*,²⁹ the main waterways of the earth and the mountains were actually composed of different parts of the vanquished goddess Tīāmat, who was defeated by the Babylonian chief deity, Marduk. One Sumerian text, *Enki and the World Order* suggests that rivers, such as the Euphrates, consisted of semen from the god Enki (lines 250–58).³⁰ The earth was not a tiny, microscopic speck floating in a vast, expanding universe as modern astrophysics holds, but was the center of the cosmos—a flat layer between the heavens and the watery deep (Sumerian: **abzu**; Akkadian: *apsū*). Cosmic events took place in important Mesopotamian cities and on a cosmic plane, and gods traveled between existing cities in ways that mirrored actual travel routes.³¹ Cities in Mesopotamia also possessed patron deities who seem to have acted as the “life force” of the city. If that god decided to abandon his or her city, the city would fall into ruin. Clearly, cosmology and geography were intimately connected.

The Mesopotamian landscape was informed by a cartographic imagination that located Sumer—and later, Babylonia or Assyria—at the center of the world and other, “exotic” lands on the periphery. The *Sargon Geography*, composed during the Neo-Assyrian period³² and the *Babylonian Map of the World* composed during the eighth to ninth century BCE,³³ seem to have been among the more popular cartographic descriptions from Mesopotamia because they are the only ones that have survived. In the *Sargon Geography*, Sargon claims to have “delineated borders for and measured circumference for” the different territories of the world (lines 63–64), perhaps, executing the will of the gods who divided the world into its distinct boundaries at the beginning of time (as in *Lugalbanda in the Mountain Cave*). According to both the *Babylonian Map of the World* and the *Sargon Geography*, the world was one large continent surrounded by a sea, referred to as the *marrātu* in the *Babylonian Map* across which existed distant islands, identified in the *Sargon Geography* as Anaku (“tin land”), Kaptara (Caphtor = Crete), Dilmun (Bahrain?), Meluḫḫa (Indus River Valley?) and Magan (Oman?) (lines 30, 41–42).³⁴ According to the *Babylonian Map of the World*, these islands were home to a variety of exotic (some non-existent and legendary such as the “scorpion man”) animals and plants.³⁵ Lines 45–59 of the *Sargon Geography* contain ethnographic information about different peoples, and since these lines were probably composed during the Neo-Assyrian period, I will save them for the discussion on Neo-Assyrian caricatures of foreigners.

While some Mesopotamian texts speak of a number of dangers in geographic locations outside of urban life,³⁶ they point to the mountain ranges that surrounded Mesopotamia as particularly dangerous. Both the western mountains and eastern mountains could be home to dangerous, unruly people, such as western Amorites as described by Ur III texts, and the eastern Gutians and Lullubi. But the eastern mountain ranges are home to the most insidious enemies.³⁷ The mountain landscape served an ideological role as a foil against which the civilized life of urban Mesopotamia was compared. Black writes that mountain vistas:

...are mental constructs: they have no necessary connection with the topography of particular places. Part of the structural function of such scenes is to be what Piotr Michalowski has called “paradigmatic representations of the superiority of the culture of Sumer”: we are intended to contrast the mountains to the desirable world at home.³⁸

A part of that mountain motif was the presence of peoples who were perceived as threats to civilized urban life in Mesopotamia. As Piotr Michalowski puts it:

In early Mesopotamian cosmology, the eastern mountains symbolized a unique nexus of contradictory as well as complementary notions. This was the source of many of the luxury goods that made the good life worthwhile—with the exception of food, clothing and beer. It was also the home of peoples who continuously threatened to destroy all civilized life in the alluvial plain of what is now Iraq.³⁹

The Sumerian stories about Enmerkar and Lugalbanda, the legendary early kings of Uruk, which developed between the Ur III period and the end of the Isin-Larsa/Old-Babylonian Period, seem to be some of the earliest manifestations of the motif that portrays the mountains as a source of enemies to be defeated. According to one legend, *Lugalbanda in the Mountain Cave*, Lugalbanda, who will become the king of Uruk, nearly dies in the mountains, which are referred to as the “rebel land” (**ki-bal**).⁴⁰ In the stories of Enmerkar and Lugalbanda, the enemy living in the mountains is the settlement of Aratta. The precise location of Aratta is unknown, but *Enmerkar and the Lord of Aratta* (hereafter ELA) certainly portrays Aratta as a place that is “far away” because Enmerkar’s messenger had to “cross five mountains, six mountains, seven mountains” to reach Aratta (ELA 160–71).⁴¹ The terrain on which Aratta rests is said to be rugged and hostile, as the king of Aratta boasts:

[Aratta] is a **meš**-tree grown high to the sky; its roots form a net, and its branches are a snare. It may be a sparrow but it has the talons of

an Anzu bird or of an eagle. The barrier of Inanna is perfectly made and is impenetrable (?). Those eagle talons make the blood of the enemy run from the bright mountain.⁴²

The stories about Aratta demonstrate that the portrayal of “mountain peoples” is complicated because Aratta is, in fact, a settlement and seems to have important aspects of settled life, like granaries. In contrast to the Amorites, often portrayed as a mountain people, whom some texts claim do not know of foodstuffs like grain (*še*), the people of Aratta seem to have a diet that is based on wheat (*kib*) and pulse (*gú*).⁴³ The people of Aratta also appear to be capable of metalworking⁴⁴ and masonry (ELA 38–64), but seem not to have developed agriculture because their staples, wheat and pulses, grow abundantly on their own nearby (ELA 550–4). Aratta is also referred to as the “mountain of the divine powers (*me*),” which the ruler of Aratta sees as a sign of divine favor (ELA 218–26).

At the same time, the ruler of Aratta is unable or unwilling to build a temple for the goddess Inanna, which is something Enmerkar uses to justify his desire to conquer Aratta. It would appear as though the narrative contrasts Enmerkar’s piety with the piety of the ruler of Aratta, even though the text seems to say that the Arattan ruler in some ways gave respect to Inanna for his rule (“he put the crown on his head for Inanna,” ELA 25–32) and the ruler of Aratta relates that his people are very pious (“water libations are offered and flour is sprinkled; on the mountain, sacrifices and prayers are offered in obeisance,” ELA 248–50).

When Enmerkar, through his emissary, announces that he has received Inanna’s favor and dictates terms of Aratta’s surrender, the king of Aratta sets up a series of riddles for Enmerkar to solve in order to prove that he truly has Inanna’s favor. After Enmerkar comes up with a solution to the third riddle, Enmerkar’s messenger is unable to remember all of the words of Enmerkar’s response. So, inspired by Enlil, Enmerkar invents writing to help his messenger remember all of his words. The narrative moves quickly and does not say how the messenger learns to read the writing (which would, in reality, have taken years of tedious training involving the copying of old texts), but it is clear that the Arattan king cannot read the cuneiform writing (he sees “only nails”).

ELA presents no major stereotyping nor does the story express highly charged polemical rhetoric about the character of the king of Aratta and the people of Aratta. Aratta is not portrayed as particularly dangerous or fearsome. ELA provides a subtle contrast between the piety of Enmerkar and the king of Aratta and subtly contrasts the civilized nature of Uruk with Aratta, through the epithet “rebel land,” and the technology of writing. Due to a lack of agriculture and writing, Aratta appears technologically inferior and its king is unable or unwilling to honor Inanna properly, in spite of its cosmically significant location. But what ELA introduces subtly, stories about

Sargon and Naram-Sin as well as some Ur III texts, will introduce explicitly in their descriptions of dangerous mountain peoples.

The political landscape of the kings of Akkad

The story of Enmerkar seems to promote an idea, shared by legends of the kings of Akkad, that a king's legitimacy is dependent on his ability to dominate the mountainous periphery. Unlike Akkadian kings, Enmerkar was not said to have ruled the entire world, but he could, if he desired, dominate a foreign, mountainous terrain. A number of legends about the kings of Akkad claim that they traversed and conquered the “four corners of the earth” (*kibrāt arba'ī*), especially the mountains.⁴⁵ In the *Sargon Geography*, Sargon claims to have “ruled the peoples of the entire world,” ruled the “four corners of the earth” and “conquered the entirety of the land under heaven.” In Sargon's “autobiographical” birth legend, he boasts, “Difficult mountains I passed through using copper picks; the upper ranges I climbed again and again; the lower ranges I jumped over again and again; the sea-land I circumnavigated three times” (lines 16–17).⁴⁶ The Old Babylonian composition “Sargon the Conquering Hero” (AO 6702) is probably the most explicit in showing that a king's reputation was built on his ability to explore and master the periphery. Here Sargon boasts, “the king who wants to equal me, where I have gone, let him go!” (lines 120–3).⁴⁷ In the “Great Revolt Against Naram-Sin,” a story about a massive, world-wide rebellion against Naram-Sin, he also claimed to be king of the “four quarters” of the world.⁴⁸

These literary texts echo the actual inscriptions of the kings of Akkad, all of whom claim to be “king of the entire world” (LUGAL KIŠ = *šar kiššati*). All of Sargon's descendants, including his sons Rimuš and Man-ištūšu and his great grandson, Šar-kali-šarri, took on this epithet. Sargon claimed control over the land from the Upper Sea (Mediterranean) to the Lower Sea (Persian Gulf) “as far as the cedar forest” (Lebanon) and the silver mountains (the Zagros) and even “moored the ships of Meluḥḥa, Magan and Dilmun in the quay of Akkad.”⁴⁹ While Sargon's boast only claims that he established trade relations with these distant lands, which were thought to be across the sea, Naram-Sin's inscriptions do claim that he waged a major campaign against Magan. Naram-Sin is also referred to as “king of the four quarters” (*kibrāt arba'im*), who conducted successful campaigns in faraway places such as Elam, Paraḥšum, and Magan.⁵⁰

Also like ELA, some stories and inscriptions of Sargon and Naram-Sin offer justifications for the kings' conquest of foreign lands. It is not simply ego, ambition or the arbitrary will of the gods alone that drive Sargon and Naram-Sin to conquer foreign lands; these kings' senses of wisdom, justice and piety often legitimate their expeditions. One of Sargon's inscriptions credits him with “wisdom” (GEŠTU = *uznum*⁵¹) from the god Enlil (remember Enmerkar's inspiration for writing, also from Enlil) (E2.1.1.15, 17–18). In “Sargon, King

of Battle,” a text that was found at Tell el-Amarna (Egypt),⁵² Sargon launches an expedition against the land of Purušhanda, another distant mountain land, which seems to be located in the west, in Anatolia. According to the legend, the route to Purušhanda is difficult and the land itself is located in a mountainous terrain (lines 25, 28). Sargon’s reason for the campaign is that some merchants are being mistreated by Nur-Daggal, the king of Purušhanda. The merchants complain that they are victims of “violence” (*kiššutu*, literally an illegitimate exercise of power,⁵³ line 18) and treachery (*daṣātu*). Sargon agrees to help the aggrieved merchants despite the objections of some of his troops, invading Purušhanda and maintaining an occupation for three years.

Sargon was even said to have rescued oppressed cities and restored them to a position of dignity. When the major city states of Naram-Sin’s empire rebel against him under the leadership of the city of Kiš, Naram-Sin notes that his grandfather Sargon “had established freedom for the population of Kiš, had shaved off their slave marks and had broken off their shackles... Kiš was not an enemy—[he] was in brotherhood with me” (lines 16–23).⁵⁴ Sargon saved the city from its slavery under Lugalzagesi, Sargon’s rival in Uruk, whom another version of the “Great Revolt against Naram-Sin”⁵⁵ calls a “despoiler” or “plunderer” (*musallih*⁵⁶). Nevertheless, despite Sargon’s generosity, the city shows no loyalty to Sargon’s grandson. The moral outrage over the audacity of a city that would dare repay the benevolence of a king with rebellion becomes a theme that would recur throughout the centuries. In an example of projection, perhaps, even though the Sargonic dynasty forcibly extracted plenty of tribute from dominated lands and indeed claimed to rule the entire world, it is Lugalzagesi who is called a despoiler, not Naram-Sin. In other words, to the compilers of the legend, “our guy,”⁵⁷ Naram-Sin, is not capable of despoiling; only “the other guy” despoils.

Some texts also portray Naram-Sin as a just and pious king, in contrast to other leaders who act treacherously. *Erra and Naram-Sin* identifies Naram-Sin as “the wise one (*eršum*), who takes pleasure in justice, who built your [Erra’s] temple” (lines 66–8).⁵⁸ *Erra and Naram-Sin* tells the story of unidentified enemies raised by the god Enlil, whom Naram-Sin fights with the support of the gods, Ištar and Erra. While this particular campaign by Naram-Sin is presented as a defensive one, it establishes Naram-Sin’s piety and justice. In fact, Naram-Sin’s willingness to build a temple for Erra seems to be a major reason that the god agrees to fight on his side. In addition, Naram-Sin is portrayed as merciful at times. In one description of the revolt against him, the text (VAT 7832a), written in an “autobiographical” format, claims that the rebellious cities revolted against Naram-Sin nine times and “nine times I let them go free” (lines 3–4).⁵⁹ It was only after the tenth time, apparently, that Naram-Sin did not let them go free. Unfortunately, the text is fragmentary and breaks off so it is unclear what Naram-Sin did to the cities that rebelled for the tenth time.

The representations of Sargon and Naram-Sin as just, wise, pious, and merciful justifies the ruthlessness and ferocity of these kings, including the maltreatment of captives. If, for example, the tradition of Lugalzagesi as a “despoiler” of Kiš was circulating when Sargon boasted in an inscription that he brought Lugalzagesi to Akkad in a neck stock, then Lugalzagesi’s humiliation can be seen as an example of “poetic justice.” Perhaps scribes copying these inscriptions also had such an impression. The beneficence of Sargon in liberating Kiš renders disloyalty to Akkad an act of ungrateful, insolent rebels. The mercy of Naram-Sin demonstrates that a good king is slow to anger and when the king acts cruelly, he does so because he must. In one Old Akkadian legend⁶⁰ about Sargon, which describes one of his banquets at Kaneš, Sargon was said to have made the prince of Tukriš wear animal hide, covered the heads of Alašian (Cypriot) captives like women, mutilated Amorite prisoners (cutting off noses and performing penectomies), bound the heads of the Kilani in reins and had Hattian heads shaven in the middle.⁶¹ The treatment of these particular captives may have some symbolic value. The animal hide could signify a dehumanization of enemies that developed in the literary tradition (see *Dangerous and “Foolish” Mountain Peoples* below), and the feminization of the Alašian captives seems to suggest that enemies may be regarded in some way as effeminate. Whatever these particularly humiliating rituals might have communicated about the peoples conquered, they were sure to communicate one thing: the moral authority of the king to treat his enemies in this fashion.

As the story of Enmerkar seems to suggest, when a king clearly has the favor of the gods, it is necessary for any rivals to submit and, of course, provide the necessary goods and tribute:

Lest I make the people fly off from that city like a wild dove from its tree, lest I make them fly around like a bird over its well-founded nest, lest I requite (?) them as if at a current market rate, lest I make it gather dust like an utterly destroyed city, lest like a settlement cursed by Enki and utterly destroyed, I too utterly destroy Aratta; lest like the devastation which swept destructively, and in whose wake Inana arose, shrieked and yelled aloud, I too wreak a sweeping devastation there—let Aratta pack nuggets of gold in leather sacks, placing alongside it the *kumea* ore; package up precious metals, and load the packs on the donkeys of the mountains.⁶²

The consequences of defying Enmerkar on the part of the king of Aratta are clear. Enmerkar will disperse the city’s population and destroy the land if Aratta does not submit. The destruction and devastation that a land endures, including, presumably, the humiliating treatment of its leaders and captives, is simply a result of defying the will of the gods—and is, thus, deserved.

As we will see below, the idea that rulers who rebel against the monarch deserve cruelty because of their insolence will continue well into the Neo-Assyrian period. Neo-Assyrian kings would use the idea that they were a “civilizing” force in the world to justify their harsh treatment of enemy rulers and captives. Those who rebel against the king will be portrayed as foolish, insane and impious for rejecting the will of the gods. The humiliating treatment of prisoners, which included forcing them to behave in an animalistic fashion, dressing them up in animal clothes, mutilation, public torture, and deportations—all of which are attested in this earlier material—will be justified as a rightful punishment for rebellious vassals and leaders.

Dangerous mountain peoples

At some point, a tradition developed which portrays Naram-Sin as a king who fell out of favor with the gods because of an offense against them (usually the Enlil is the offended deity). In retaliation for this offense, the nature of which varies in different sources, Enlil raises up an enemy against him, which effectively ends the rule of Akkad. The *Curse of Akkad*, composed in Sumerian during the Ur III period, and the *Weidner Chronicle*, a legendary text about the former kings of Mesopotamia composed in the first millennium BCE, blame the Gutians, an eastern mountain people, for the collapse of the Akkadian empire. The *Cuthean Legend of Naram-Sin* does not name the enemy that ends Akkad’s hegemony, but uses the term *ummān manda* (something like “enemy horde,” see below), a term much debated by Assyriologists, to describe them.

These interpretations seem to be attempts to explain the fall of Akkad (which actually happened shortly after the reign of Naram-Sin’s son, Šar-kali-šarri⁶³) and the massive rebellion that broke out against Naram-Sin during his reign. Indeed, later texts, by focusing on Naram-Sin, seem to conflate the “Great Rebellion” and the collapse of the empire. In reality, the actual circumstances of the fall of Akkad are shrouded in mystery. Most Assyriologists seem to think that the fall of Akkad was the result of a variety of factors, the most important of which was the political instability of the empire due to the inherent tension between the central government and the distribution of power and wealth among officials and local elites. One sign that the empire was inherently unstable is that according to omen texts, three out of the five Sargonic kings—Rimuš, Man-ištušu and Šar-kali-šarri—were assassinated in palace conspiracies.⁶⁴ Incursions by outside groups such as the Gutians, Amorites and Lullubians may have played a role in the collapse, but these incursions are probably more of a contributing factor than the decisive factor.

The story of the fall of Akkad was a popular topic of literature as well as omen texts, showing that the fall of the Akkadian empire was a major motif

in the Mesopotamian imagination. Some texts, such as one of Šamšī-Adad’s inscriptions at the Temple of Ishtar in Nineveh, referred to the event as the “fall” of Akkad (*šulum Akkadē*); others called it the “destruction” of Akkad (*šaḥluqtum*, a term popular in omen texts), and the “dispersal” (*sapāḫu*) of Akkad.⁶⁵ In omen texts, the city becomes a symbol of destruction and its name is associated with bad omens.

The Ur III Period seems to have been an era in which the “dangerous mountain people” motif crystallized in Mesopotamian texts. During the Ur III Period, the *Curse of Akkad*, which contains extremely negative polemics about the Gutians was composed; during the same period, many well-known polemics about the Amorites developed. It seems as though the composers of the *Curse of Akkad* employed this motif to explain the destruction of Akkad. If the Gutians actually made significant incursions into Mesopotamia during the disintegration of the Akkadian empire, the memory of their presence would be fresh in the memories of writers during the Ur III period. However, the highly stylized, stereotyped presentation of the Gutians in the *Curse of Akkad* may suggest that the Gutians in this text are more of a literary creation than a reflection of a historic memory.

In fact, the non-literary historical record leaves very little trace of the Gutians. The first undisputed reference to them appears to be from the reign of Šar-kali-šarrī, who claims in an inscription to have captured a certain Šarlag, king of the Gutians.⁶⁶ A correspondence from a person named Iškun-Dagan also refers to the disruption of agriculture by the Gutians:

...Work the field and guard the flocks! Just don’t say to me: “It is (the fault of) the Gutians; I could not work the land!” Man outposts every mile, and then you will be able to work the land! If soldiers attack, you can raise help and have the herd brought into the city. In the event that (you tell me) “the Gutians have rustled the flocks,” I will say nothing about it and (just) pay you the money.⁶⁷

Because Iškun-Dagan swears on the life of Šar-kali-šarrī and his wife in this letter, it is safe to assume that this text dates from the time of Šar-kali-šarrī. From this letter, it would seem as though there is some historical basis to the idea that the Gutians posed some kind of threat to the land of Akkad. However, the letter writer seems to think that local forces can adequately handle them; they are hardly the monstrous horde that would emerge in the legends.

The *Sumerian King List* (depending on the version) suggests that there was a 100 to 125-year period of Gutian rule in Mesopotamia after the fall of Akkad.⁶⁸ In addition, there are inscriptions suggesting that some Gutians thought of themselves as people who took over Sargon’s empire. For example, an inscription of Erridu-pizir (who does not even appear in the *Sumerian King List*) claims that he is the “king of Gutium and of the four quarters.”⁶⁹

However, a number of scholars question whether there was a hundred year Gutian dynasty in Mesopotamia, and they are especially skeptical of the ability of the Gutians to finish off the Akkadian empire. The inscriptions of Erridu-pizir are copies that date from the Old Babylonian period and may reflect the ideas of later scribes, who could have been more influenced by texts like the *Curse of Akkad* than the actual political power of the Gutians.⁷⁰ Based on an analysis of records from city states in the south of Mesopotamia, William W. Hallo argues that the domination of the Gutians lasted only 25–35 years, and was probably very localized, perhaps limited to certain cities such as Umma.⁷¹ Certainly, contemporaneous texts show that there were interactions with Gutians, but very little suggests that there was widespread Gutian rule in the region. Finally, the early kings of the Ur III dynasty, Ur-Nammu and Šulgi, were credited with defeating the Gutians, whatever their power might have been. Yet, even if textual records such as the *Sumerian King List* and Erridu-pizir inscriptions are of dubious historical merit, the texts indicate that there was at least an important tradition that developed about a powerful Gutian dynasty in northern Mesopotamia.⁷²

The curse of Akkad

It appears as though the *Curse of Akkad* was composed in Sumerian sometime between the reign of Naram-Sin and the end of the third millennium BCE.⁷³ The story begins with a description of the glory of Akkad and, like many city laments, goes on to describe the goddess Inanna’s abandonment of the city (lines 55–85).⁷⁴ The *Curse* eventually claims that Naram-Sin committed a great sacrilegious offense by destroying Enlil’s temple, which incurs the wrath of Enlil. Notably, the story does not provide a clear reason for Inanna’s abandonment or the gods’ unfavorable disposition toward Akkad. The circumstances seem similar to the ones that accompanied the destruction of Sumer and Ur: the gods, for whatever reason, decreed that the city’s time was up. Akkad’s days were numbered. According to the narrative, Naram-Sin knew the end was near because it was revealed to him in a dream, causing him to fall into a deep seven-year depression (lines 85–93). He is so depressed that the text comments, “Who has ever seen a king act so anomalously for seven years?” (line 93).

Undeniably, what Naram-Sin does in response to this unfavorable premonition makes the situation much worse. To alter his fortunes, it would appear as though Naram-Sin tries to build a temple (the text does not clarify for whom it is to be built), but the extispicy omens deny him permission for the project (lines 94–8). In order to change the outcome of the omen, Naram-Sin razes Ekur, the shrine of the god Enlil. In retaliation, a livid Enlil then raises up the Gutians to destroy Akkad.

Naram-Sin’s desire to build a temple is interesting in light of other Akkadian texts that portray Enlil as an inimical force that raises enemies

against Naram-Sin. In other stories, the enemies raised by Enlil are defeated by Naram-Sin. In the Old Babylonian legend *Erra and Naram-Sin*, the king joins forces with the gods Ištar and Erra to defeat an unnamed hostile army raised by Enlil. In the legend, Naram-Sin says to Erra, “Let me build you a temple in which joy (is found)!”⁷⁵ It appears as though the building of the temple is connected with Erra’s agreement to help him. In the *Cuthean Legend of Naram-Sin*, Naram-Sin also faces ferocious enemies raised by the gods Tiamat and Bēlet-ilī, but appears to be able to move Ea to intervene so that he can beat back the enemy. These stories raise different possibilities about Naram-Sin’s motivation for building the temple. Is Naram-Sin trying to build a temple in order to play gods against one another in the *Curse*, as he did in the later legend of *Erra and Naram-Sin*? Is he trying to curry the favor of a sympathetic god by building the temple? If that is Naram-Sin’s goal in the *Curse*, it does not work. The omens clearly state that no temple is to be built and his decision to destroy Ekur results in a terrible reckoning by Enlil as well as a repudiation of him and his city by all of the gods.

The description of the people that Enlil raises up against Naram-Sin is wholly negative:

He looked toward the Gubin mountains; He scoured all of the broad mountain ranges—Not classed among people (**un-gá nu-si-ga**⁷⁶), not reckoned as part of the land (**kalam-ma nu-šid-da**), Gutium, a people who know no inhibitions (**kēš-da nu-zu**), with human instincts (**dīm-ma lú-ulu**₃⁷⁷), but canine intelligence (**galga ur-ra**) and monkey’s features (**sig₇-alan** ^{u^g}**ugu₄-bi**)—Enlil brought them out of the mountains.⁷⁷

A number of features that would become typical of the “dangerous mountain people” motif appear in the *Curse of Akkad*. They are described as being from the mountains and not part of the “land” (**kalam**), which reinforces the opposition between the “mountains” as a peripheral, exotic locale and the central “land” (**kalam**). They also “know no inhibitions (**kēš-da nu-zu**).” The Sumerian word **kēš-da** literally means “binding” and when **kēš-da** is translated into Akkadian, it is usually rendered *rakāsu* (“to bind”). The basic meaning of the Akkadian verb *rakāsu* is to tie something or bind something, however, the word can also be rendered “to make an agreement,” “make an oath” or “establish [legal pronouncements]” in contexts that require the word be translated as such.⁷⁸

Because the idea of “binding” is used in the context of making oaths, agreements, and legal pronouncements, in the *Curse of Akkad* the Sumerian word **kēš-da** might communicate more than the idea that the Gutians are uninhibited and wild. The text may also suggest that they do not understand social conventions such as making a contracts, oaths, and agreements. As we will see with respect to other dangerous liminal peoples such as the Cimmerians, a refusal to honor agreements and treaties will be a recurring theme in polemics against certain mountain peoples.

The Gutians are people, and yet “not” people, who have physical features of monkeys and who have an admixture of human and canine mental capacity. The word “features” (**sig-alan**) refers to the Gutians’ *physical* features and not their mental faculties. In Akkadian, **sig-alan** (also transliterated SA₇.ALAN⁷⁹) is rendered *bunnannû* in a couple of Old Babylonian texts,⁸⁰ and *bunnannû* denotes the “general region of the face” or “outer appearance, figure, likeness” or “features.”⁸¹ It is difficult to determine whether or not the *Curse* refers to the facial features of the Gutians or their entire bodily form, since **sig-alan** can refer to both. The Gutians also have the “instincts” (**dīm-ma**) of humans but the intelligence (**galga**) of dogs. Interestingly, the *Curse* places the words **dīm-ma** and **galga** in opposition to one another because they both appear to refer to mental faculties. The former is usually rendered *tēmu* (“decision,” “deliberation,” “reason,” “intelligence”⁸²) in Akkadian whereas the latter is usually rendered *milku* (“counsel,” “intellectual capacity,” “mood,” “spirit”⁸³)—though **galga** is also, at times, rendered *tēmu*.⁸⁴ Whatever the writers wanted to convey precisely, it certainly seems as though the text asserts that the mental faculties of the Gutians are comprised of both human and dog-like features.

What did “monkey’s features” mean in the imagination of Mesopotamian peoples? Monkeys are not indigenous to Mesopotamia, but Mesopotamian sculptors and artists were familiar with them because they appear in Mesopotamian decorative art, from a variety of time periods. For example, monkeys appear on cylinder seals from the Early Dynastic Period at Ur, from the Neo-Assyrian Period, and from the Neo-Babylonian period.⁸⁵ Monkeys also appear to have been kept as a kind of exotic pet because some depictions of monkeys show them with collars, possibly demonstrating that they were domesticated. In addition, a wall relief from the Nimrud palace of Aššurnāṣirpal II depicts the king receiving a monkey as a gift from Phoenicians.⁸⁶ Particularly relevant for the description of the Gutians in the *Curse*, in some texts and inscriptions, monkeys seem to be performing human activities. In a Sumerian letter, which was possibly a comical writing exercise for scribes in training, a monkey writes to his mother, complaining about his life as the pet of a musician.⁸⁷ Some depictions of monkeys also show them playing musical instruments, especially flutes and pipes.⁸⁸ It is possible that the writer(s) of the *Curse* chose monkeys to describe the features of Gutians because of the close connection between some human behaviors and monkeys.

While the cultural significance of “monkey’s features” may not be entirely clear, the use of “monkey’s features” reinforces the picture the *Curse* wants to present of the Gutians as human beings with animalistic mental and physical attributes, who end up bringing rapine, economic disaster and natural disaster on the land. Interestingly, taking the portrayal of monkeys in Mesopotamian art into consideration, the writer(s) of the *Curse* chose two frequently *domesticated* animals to describe the Gutians. Does the fact that the *Curse* often uses the imagery of animals that were domesticated at times

communicate something about how the Gutians were conceptualized? Was the *Curse* simply using animals that might resonate with readers to communicate that the Gutians were inferior human beings with animalistic traits? Or was the *Curse* communicating that peoples on the periphery should be dominated and “tamed” like domesticated animals?

This last possibility seems somewhat plausible considering the fact that Mesopotamian kings often treated captive enemy leaders like animals. As previously discussed, Sargon of Akkad dressed up one of his enemies in animal hides. And in later, Neo-Assyrian portrayals of defeated enemies, some of them are tied up with other domesticated animals. For example, Aššurbanipal claims to have tied up rebel kings with dogs and forced them to guard the city gate with them.⁸⁹ Unfortunately, the inscriptions of Neo-Assyrian kings usually do not explain the symbolic value of their humiliating treatment of prisoners. Aššurbanipal does not explicitly state, “We are tying up Uaite of Arabia and Ammuladi of Qidri with dogs because they are like animals that need to be tamed.” We can only speculate that one of the reasons this humiliating treatment might have meant something to Neo-Assyrian rulers is the relationship between animalistic imagery and foreign peoples on the periphery—a relationship emphasized by stories like the *Curse of Akkad*.⁹⁰

Lamentation over Sumer and Ur

The Gutians appear again in the Old Babylonian⁹¹ *Lamentation over Sumer and Ur* as a destructive mountain people raised by the gods. In the *Lament*, unlike Naram-Sin, Ibbī-Sin, last king of the Ur III dynasty, commits no sin that brings about the calamities that befall the land. Rather, for unexplained reasons, the gods decide to leave their habitations in various major cities across Mesopotamia. The *Lament* says that Enlil “sent down Gutium from the mountains” (line 75) and uses imagery to portray the Gutians as a large mass: a “flood of Enlil that cannot be withstood” (line 76). Also like the *Curse*, natural convulsions accompany the Gutians’ advance: “The dark time was roasted by hailstones and flames. The bright time was wiped out by a shadow...heaven rumbled, the earth trembled, the storm worked without respite. Heaven was darkened, it was covered by a shadow; the mountains roared” (lines 79–81). The *Lament* characterizes the Gutians as an “evil people” or “destructive people” (*lú-ḫa-lam*, line 230). According to the *Lament*, Enlil raised another eastern people, the Elamites, from the mountains (line 166), who bring about similar calamities, putting Elam in the same category as other dangerous mountain peoples.

It would appear as though the Gutians turned the land inside out. As a result of their incursions, the land became a “rebel land” (*ki-bal*, lines 144–5), the same word used to describe the hostile, mountainous terrain near Aratta in *Lugalbanda in the Mountain Cave* (lines 23, 440). The Gutians, a people who descended from the mountains, brought the inhuman, harsh

habitation of the mountains to the center with them. Even mountain animals began to take up residence: “the snake of the mountains made his lair there” (line 145).

The Cuthean Legend of Naram-Sin

The *Cuthean Legend of Naram-Sin*, a text attested in fragments from the Old Babylonian period, best known from its Standard Babylonian recension, also deals with a mountainous people that end the regime of Akkad. This story seems to have been very popular because a Middle Babylonian version was found at Hattuša in Anatolia (with Hittite translation), a Standard Babylonian version was discovered in the Aššurbanipal library in Nineveh, a Neo-Assyrian version at Sultantepe and a Neo-Babylonian copy from Kiš.⁹² In this legend, however, Naram-Sin seems to be successful in turning back the mountain peoples.

The *Cuthean Legend* does not say that Naram-Sin’s enemy is the people of Gutium, but does, in the Standard Babylonian version, name the leader of the enemy as a certain Anubanini (line 39), who, many Assyriologists believe, was the king of the Lullubians, another mountain people from the east known for being a good source of slaves and stock-farming products.⁹³ Alternatively, the text refers to the enemy itself as *ummān manda*, a term that appears in a variety of Mesopotamian texts from Old Babylonian omen texts to Cyrus inscriptions late in the history of ancient Mesopotamia. I will, following Westenholz, render this perplexing term as “Manda horde.”

Westenholz left *manda* untranslated because there is a great deal of debate over what the word may mean. The meaning of the word *ummānu* (written logographically ERÍN/ERÍN.MEŠ) is well established: “army, troops,” and sometimes “crowd.” Westenholz suggests noncommittally that *manda* could be a corruption of the country Mardaman/Maridaban, which is somewhere in the upper Tigris region of northern Mesopotamia—a land Sargon defeated according to *Sargon in the Foreign Lands*.⁹⁴ Selim F. Adalı, reviewing a number of proposals for the meaning of the word, concludes that the meaning of the term cannot be known.⁹⁵ Despite its obscure etymology, the word does seem to have particular thematic associations. The Manda horde is often associated with the “east wind” (IM.KUR.RA = *šadû/šadî’um*) and Adalı proposes that *ummān manda* refers to a “location remote from mainstream civilization” based on its contrast with the *ummān dadmē*, or “army of the inhabited world.”⁹⁶ Ultimately, the term is “a label devoid of any specific ethnic connotation, used to describe a hostile mountain people.”⁹⁷ In other words, the term can apply to any invading people from the mountains and does not solely describe Naram-Sin’s enemies in the *Cuthean Legend*.

Naram-Sin receives an unfavorable omen (the text of which has been lost). Apparently, it is about the coming destruction of the Manda hordes because he scolds the (long dead) Enmerkar for not leaving an inscription about how

to deal with this insidious army. The story then goes into a description of the Manda horde:

A people with partridge bodies (*šābu pagri īššur hurri*), a race⁹⁸ (*amēlūta*) with raven’s faces (*āribū pānūšun*), the great gods created them. On the land which the gods created was their city. Tiamat suckled them. Their progenitress (*šassūršunu*) Bēlet-ilī made them beautiful. In the midst of the mountains, they grew up, reached man’s estate and attained full stature.⁹⁹

These people seem to have been specially created by the creator-goddesses Bēlet-ilī and Tiamat. Bēlet-ilī is literally referred to as their “womb” (*šassūru*), as in the mother who gave birth to them—a common epithet for Bēlet-ilī. In some texts, both of these figures are associated with the mountains. The mountains are said to be home to Bēlet-ilī and a victorious Marduk heaped the mountains over the waterways (part of Tiamat’s body) in *Enūma Eliš*, the Babylonian creation myth.¹⁰⁰

The odd appearance of the horde and the reference to Tiamat make sense because she can create grotesque, composite beings. *Enūma Eliš* lists some of Tiamat’s unpleasant creatures: the horned serpent, the *mušhuššu* dragon, the *lahmu*-hero, the *ugallu* demon, the rabid dog, scorpion man, *umu*-demons, fish-man and bull-man.¹⁰¹ In fact, the possible link between these people and the kinds of monsters Tiamat might create may be so obvious to Naram-Sin’s character that he actually has his scout test to see whether or not they are actually human:

I handed over to him a stiletto and a pin. “Strike them with the stiletto! Prick them with the pin! If blood comes out, they are men like us. If blood does not come out, they are evil spirits, messengers of death, fiends, malevolent demons, creatures of Enlil.” The scout brought back his report: “I struck them with the stiletto; I pricked them with the pin and blood came out” (lines 63–71).

The fact that the Manda horde does bleed proves that they are human. By contrast, in *Enūma Eliš*, Tiamat fills her monstrous brood with venom, not blood.

Naram-Sin wants to confront this enemy, but when he consults the gods to find out the best course of action, the gods answer with a resounding “no,” forbidding him to pursue the Manda horde. Naram-Sin is incredulous. His refusal to accept the oracle is perfectly understandable considering the typical expectations of a Mesopotamian king. A king is supposed to demonstrate his power by dominating the “four quarters” of the earth and by asserting his domination over foreign lands and peoples. One could imagine that in Naram-Sin’s mind the oracle simply *cannot* be true because it would contradict a popular ideology of kingship. The *Cuthean Legend* may be highlighting

tensions within Mesopotamian ideologies of kingship. On the one hand, the king is expected to conquer faraway lands, subdue enemies and protect his people. On the other hand, the king must demonstrate obedience to the gods and accept their will, even if obedience means that he will be unable to fulfill the typical expectations of kingship.

The headstrong Naram-Sin ignores the oracle and engages the Manda horde only to see his troops annihilated by the enemy. The legend claims that he lost 270,000 men. Naram-Sin's commitment to the typical expectations of kingship is confirmed by a soliloquy, which he utters in a deep depression: “I am a king who does not keep his country safe and a shepherd who does not safeguard his people. How shall I ever continue so that I can get myself out of this?” (lines 91–2). Naram-Sin's inability to defeat the Manda horde demonstrates that he cannot fulfill his proper role as a king. Ea, presumably seeing Naram-Sin's depression, intervenes and the gods give Naram-Sin permission to pursue the Manda horde, which he does successfully (lines 121–3).

He is so successful, in fact, that Ištar forbids him from destroying the Manda horde entirely, exclaiming, “Desist! Destroy not the brood of destruction (*zēr ḫalqati lā tuḫallaq*)!” Assyriologists understand the expression *zēr ḫalqati*, a pejorative term applied to the Manda horde here, in a variety of ways.¹⁰² Following Adah, I believe that Westenholz has rendered the best translation: “brood of destruction.” The “brood of destruction” is so named because they, eventually, will be destroyed:

In the Cuthean Legend, *zēr ḫalqati* is a way of noting that a people is doomed to destruction by the gods or the temporary destruction and lawlessness they will cause until the gods inevitably destroy them.¹⁰³

Following this pattern, Ištar, in preventing Naram-Sin from destroying the Manda horde, proclaims that the god Enlil will arrange their destruction himself. In the end, Naram-Sin leaves an inscription for those who follow him, warning them that if they should ever confront the Manda horde, they should just hunker down and accept their rampage passively:

Let him roam through your land! Go not out to him! Let him scatter the cattle! Do not go near him! Let him consume the flesh of your offspring! Let him murder and let him return (unharméd)! But you be self-controlled, disciplined. Answer them, “Here I am, sir!” Requite their wickedness with kindness!

The reason that the king should respond to this enemy without violence is probably because they are doomed anyway, and the gods have allowed them to roam for undisclosed reasons. The Manda horde, as a “brood of destruction,” will come to a violent end. Yet, as this description shows, those who must endure the Manda horde must grin and bear some profound injustices.

The Manda horde murders, rustles cattle and unless the reference to consuming the flesh of the offspring is metaphorical or hyperbole, the Manda hordes are even capable of cannibalism. These acts are collectively referred to as “wickedness” or “sin” (*gullultu*).¹⁰⁴

The literary creation of this monstrous, murderous, cannibalizing, wicked Manda horde may have introduced some nuance to more traditional notions of Mesopotamian kingship. Sometimes, the king must simply accept the limits of his power and passively receive the will of the gods. Patience and endurance—even in the face of an enemy as violent, depraved and brutal as the Manda hordes—are traits that are just as “kingly” as aggressive expansion. Pitting Naram-Sin, a successful king with a penchant for hotheadedness, against the Manda horde emphasizes the lesson further. But the Manda horde is not simply a literary creation designed to make didactic points about military tactics or proper kingship. The Manda horde, as a literary creation, will become important in polemical descriptions of real enemies of the king in later periods.

Weidner Chronicle

The last tradition about the Sargonic kings is the *Weidner Chronicle*, otherwise known as the *Chronicle of Esagil*, copies of which date to the Neo-Assyrian and Neo-Babylonian periods (626–539 BCE).¹⁰⁵ The *Chronicle* recounts the shifting hegemonies in Mesopotamia as a story of kings who committed various cultic offenses against Esagil, the shrine for the chief Babylonian deity Marduk and the center of Babylonian worship: “Whoever offends the gods of that city [i.e., Babylon], his star shall not stand in heaven...His kingship shall end, his scepter shall be taken away from him, his treasury shall become a ruin.”¹⁰⁶ If a particular territory lost its hegemony or a ruler lost his power, the loss was explained as the result of committing an offense against Esagil. The offense could range from improperly handling Marduk’s wine and fish offerings to Sargon’s crime, which was to establish the city of Akkad as a rival to Babylon. Considering that the city of Babylon was not a major player in Mesopotamia during the hegemony of the Akkadian Empire, the *Chronicle*’s account clearly projects the Marduk cult and the importance of Babylon anachronistically into the past.

The *Chronicle* disparages almost all of the former kings of Mesopotamia it mentions, but its description of the Gutians stands out. The previous rulers made missteps in the performance of various rituals, but the *Chronicle* claims that the Gutians do not even know what the proper rituals should be: “The Gutians were oppressive (*tazzimtu*); they did not exhibit fear of the gods; they knew not [how to perform] rites and divine orders in a proper manner.”¹⁰⁷ The Gutians’ behavior seems to be linked to the absence of fear of the gods, in that their oppression *displays* (taking the verb *kullumu* literally) that they have no fear of the gods. “Fear of the gods,” of course, includes proper cultic and

religious behavior, but it also encompasses ethical behavior. As Karel van der Toorn notes, fear of the gods (*palāḫ ilī*) is “a cardinal virtue” in the ancient Near East:

All other virtues spring from this one source. For the ancients, magnanimity, uprightness, equity, honesty, temperance, courage and whatever other qualities of the soul there may be, were unthinkable outside the scope of humble devotion to the personal gods. It is above all the wisdom literature and behavioral omens which draw the profile of this calm and self-possessed man. Reading these texts, we see an image emerging, a prototype behind which lies a fusion of religious convictions and social ideals.¹⁰⁸

The Gutians fail with respect to fear of the gods on both cultic and ethical counts. The impression given by the *Chronicle* with regard to the other failed kings is that they knew what was required and failed to measure up (or sometimes, as was the case with Sargon, disobeyed the word of Marduk). The Gutians, on the other hand, could not even get past square one because they demonstrated a lack of respect for the gods, due to ignorance. The *Chronicle* links ethical failings and irreverence, affirming the connection between ethical behavior and proper worship, expressed so commonly in wisdom literature from Mesopotamia.

Interestingly, the Manda horde may appear in the *Chronicle*, if the text is emended.¹⁰⁹ The possible reference to the Manda horde suggests that they were raised in response to an offense committed by Enmerkar.¹¹⁰ Enmerkar’s offense, which has been lost, was probably similar to Naram-Sin’s offense, because the *Chronicle* uses the same terminology to describe them. Both Enmerkar and Naram-Sin “defiled” or “destroyed” (*šulputu*) their own “people” (*nammaššē*) through their offenses against Esagil. It seems as though the composer of the *Chronicle* is aware of the tradition, also found in the *Cuthean Legend*, in which Naram-Sin and Enmerkar are said to have both battled the Manda horde. However, the *Chronicle* does not refer to the Gutians as the Manda horde, opting to give the Gutians their own term, *ummān Qutī* (“the Gutian horde”). Though a different term is used in the *Weidner Chronicle*, the close connection between Naram-Sin and Enmerkar both in the *Cuthean Legend* and in the *Weidner Chronicle* suggest that the Gutians and the Manda horde are viewed in a similar light, and are a part of the same motif.

Amorites

The treatment of the Gutians in the legends about Naram-Sin is clearly part of a “mountain peoples” motif, because descriptions of the Amorites,¹¹¹ many of which date to the Ur III period, are very similar. In the case of the Amorites,

many of the very same accusations made about the Gutians are made of the Amorites, indicating the development of a standard way of talking about mountain peoples in Mesopotamian literature, especially during the Ur III (c. 2112–2004 BCE), Isin-Larsa (c. 2017–1763 BCE) and Old Babylonian (c. 2003–1595 BCE) periods. In the *Marriage of Martu*, known only from an Old Babylonian source, the god Martu, who clearly represents the “Amorite” people seeks to marry the goddess Adgar-kidug. A relative of Adgar-kidug protests:

Behold their hands are destructive (**ḥa-lam**), (their) features are those [of monkeys]. They are those who eat the taboo [of] Nanna, they have no reverence. They constantly roam about...[they are] an abomination [to] the temples of the gods. Their [counsels] are confused, [they cause] only distur[bance]. He is a man clothed with a leather sack...he lives in a tent, [exposed] to wind and rain, [and he does not recite] prayers, lives in the mountains [and does not know] the places [of the gods]. He is a man who digs up truffles at the foot of the mountain, does not know how to bend the knee and eats uncooked flesh. He has no house during his lifetime. When he dies, he will not be taken to a burial place. My girlfriend, why would you marry Martu?¹¹²

This description of the behavior of the god Martu’s family is similar to other Ur III caricatures of the Amorites. According to Paul-Alain Beaulieu, the god Amurru was not an indigenous national god of the Amorites, but was created by Mesopotamians to “find a place in their own symbolic world for the increasing presence of Amorites in Mesopotamian society.”¹¹³ Mesopotamian writers also gave the god Martu an iconography that linked him with foreign, “semi-nomadic” origins: a Syrian hat, a crooked staff that seems to have been associated with the Amorites, the fact that he either stood on a gazelle or mountain goat or was represented by those animals; and, of course, a stylized mountain itself was a part of the god’s iconography. Of all the symbology associated with Martu, the mountain goat is perhaps the most interesting, considering that in the legend of *Lugalbanda in the Mountain Cave*, goats of all kinds are associated with the mountain terrain near Aratta:

A brown goat and a nanny-goat—flea-bitten goats, lousy goats, goats covered in sores—in this way they were chewing aromatic *šimgig* as if it were barley, they were grinding up the wood of the cypress as if it were esparto grass, they were sniffing with their noses at the foliage of the *šenu* shrub as if it were grass (lines 314–17; compare line 18).

The descriptions of the Amorites’ religious practices are particularly striking. As the examples of the Gutians and Aratta showed, texts about mountain

peoples often claim that their worship is inferior in some way and *Marriage* seems to follow that tradition. *Marriage* claims that the Amorites do not pray, eat taboo foods designated for the gods like the Gutians,¹¹⁴ lack “fear” or “reverence” (*nī*)¹¹⁵ of the gods like the Gutians, and are an “abomination” (*nīg-gig*) to temples. Similarly, in *Enmerkar*, the lord of Aratta is unable to give the same level of homage to Inanna as Enmerkar, but there is an important difference between Aratta and the Gutians and Amorites. The people of Aratta seem to be able to carry out worship and prayers properly. It seems that the deficiencies of Arattan religion are not as profound as the problems imagined with Amorite and Gutian religious practices.

Marriage interweaves the negative descriptions of religious practices with negative descriptions of Amorite social practices, possibly suggesting that the two are connected. Perhaps the non-urban, mountain-dwelling lifestyle (a description I prefer to the problem-laden term, “semi-nomadic”) imagined by the authors of the myth relates to their inability to worship the gods properly, as a lack of sophisticated urban life precludes the construction of temples and the development of sophisticated religious institutions. The Amorite lifestyle also, in the minds of the authors, prevents Amorites from learning agriculture and cooking food.

At the same time, this text indicates that the negative social practices are endemic to Amorites *qua* Amorites and are not simply behavioral traits due to a social structure or behaviors that were perceived to be alterable. According to this text, the Amorites practice this non-urban, mountainous way of life *because* they are Amorites. The text demonstrates the deep-rooted nature of the Amorites’ inferiority because, like the Gutians in the *Curse of Akkad*, their *physical* features are an inseparable part of the negative portrayal.

Neo-Assyrian descriptions of foreigners

The Neo-Assyrian Empire had its own “center/periphery” schema that can be compared to the *kalam/kur* distinction, with some important distinctions. Marta Rivaroli and Lorenzo Verderame note that:

the world, from the Assyrian point of view, is divided into a central zone (Assyria) and a peripheral zone (the other countries). The “outer” landscape as opposed to an “inner” one, is marked in a negative way: steep mountains, marshes, desolated lands are border areas.¹¹⁶

The Neo-Assyrian kings adopted the earlier Sargonic rhetoric of the “four quarters” as they claimed to have brought the entire world under the “yoke” of the Assyrian national god, Aššur, for whom the Assyrian king acts as “vice-regent.”

A number of scholars imply that Neo-Assyrian identity is “fluid” and “inclusive.” Kenton L. Sparks writes:

Although the annals clearly distinguish between Assyrian and non-Assyrians, the textual evidence shows that for most of the nation’s history these foreigners could become “Assyrians” through cultural assimilation. At the very least they could become “Assyrians” through political assimilation when they submitted to the sovereignty of the Assyrian overlord.¹¹⁷

Some argue that while a few texts seem to make a clear distinction between the “people of Aššur” and foreign peoples,¹¹⁸ identification as “Assyrian” depended on one’s political relationship with Assyria. Those who submitted to Assyrian rule and, presumably, its cultural hegemony,¹¹⁹ were properly “Assyrian.” So Tiglath-Pileser III (744–727 BCE) exclaims after resettling Kutian and Sangibutian prisoners of war in Til-Karmi, “with the people of Assyria (*itti nišē māt Aššur*) I counted them. Work and corvée, like Assyrians (*ki ša Aššurē*), I imposed upon them.”¹²⁰ Because the king counted foreigners as Assyrians, “Assyria” and “Assyrian” are not ethnic terms, but “political ones, defining a region and people that manifest the required obedience.”¹²¹

Yet, the seeming willingness of Assyrian monarchs to incorporate foreigners into the Assyrian fold appears to be a response to the very foreignness of those peoples. As Peter Machinist notes, Assyria is engaged in a struggle to tame the disordered “non-Assyrian” world, and the instrument for taming that world is the king and imperial statecraft. As a result, “when the king is given, particularly at the beginning of royal inscriptions, titles embracing the world—‘king of the universe/of the four quarters’—this would seem to refer to his taming and transforming capacity.”¹²² An inscription of Sargon II (722–705 BCE) in his capital Dur-Šarrukin, also describing the resettlement of captives, succinctly sums up the driving ideology of the Neo-Assyrian empire: “Assyrians versed in all the proper culture, I ordered as overseers and supervisors to give them instruction in the fear of god and king (*palāḥ ili u šarri*).”¹²³ Non-Assyrians required the intervention of the Assyrian king because they were confused and unruly. The Manneans, for example, a people near Lake Urmia, were in “confusion” (*dalḥu*) and “did not know lordship.” The Tamudi and other desert tribes, whom the Assyrians pointed out, lived in the steppe and desert “know neither overseer, nor official.”¹²⁴ The description of these foreigners as unable to respect proper authority seems similar to the Ur III description of the Amorites as a people who do not “know how to bend the knee,” an expression that may refer to the inability of the Amorites to respect authority. Apparently, by bringing captive peoples into different Assyrian cities, the king could reform them. Thus the “inclusion” of foreigners within the Assyrian identity is an expression of the transformation of the foreigner from barbarian into an “Assyrian,” who is civilized.

Neo-Assyrian geographic texts also depict peripheral peoples as barbaric. The *Sargon Geography* lines 45–59, which were composed during the Neo-Assyrian period, lists several peoples who are characterized by strange hair, diet and building practices:

51–52 Aklitu, Amurru, the people of the South, Lullubu the people of the north, who do not know construction

54 Hanigalbat, whose locations are distant...

57–59 Karizina, which is above it, whose ha[ir style] is chosen with a razor, devoured? by fire, who do not know burial. Meat-eaters, milk and roasted-grain eaters, whos[e insi]des do not know oven-baked bread, bellies (do not know) beer.¹²⁵

The reference to the absence of construction among the Aklitu, Amurru (Amorites) and Lullubu evokes the descriptions of the Amorites in the Ur III period, which describe them as a people who live in tents. The Karizina, also like the Amorites, do not know how to bury their dead. Hairstyle is sometimes used to distinguish foreigners in inscriptions and reliefs, but hair is also an important social marker, as shown by laws that prescribe the cutting of hair for punishment or the fact that hairstyle could reflect a person's social status (slaves had a particular hairstyle).¹²⁶ While the Karizina do not scavenge for food like the Amorites, they are unfamiliar with bread and beer, both of which require the technological knowhow¹²⁷ to transform grain, making bread and beer markers of civilized society.

The characterizations in the *Sargon Geography* appear similar to characterizations in other Neo-Assyrian inscriptions, such as the texts highlighted by Carlo Zaccagnini. Zaccagnini points out that the vast majority of “ethnographic” Neo-Assyrian texts were composed after the reign of Sargon II, and these texts often remark on the location and social practices of other peoples.¹²⁸ These texts use topographic themes that are common in Mesopotamia, such as references to mountains, tents and generally inhospitable climates. Ursa, an Urartean and Urzana of Muşaşir are referred to as a “mountaineers” (*šaddû’a*) and the Cilician people are “mountaineers, who live in inaccessible mountains.”¹²⁹ Suteans and Arabs are referred to as “desert folk” (*šāb šēri*), “tent dwellers” or people who live in “the houses of the steppe, the tents where they dwell.” Cyprus, Phoenicia and Dilmun were said to be “in the middle of the sea” (*qabal tâmti*), or, according to Esarhaddon, their kings “live in the sea, whose inner wall is the sea, whose outer wall are the waves.” Zaccagnini notes that for Assyrians, “to dwell in the steppe or in the desert, under the tents, in the midst of the sea or in the marshes is viewed per se as a deviation from the normal, i.e., correct way of life in Assyria.”¹³⁰

In light of these texts characterizing the peripheral regions as barbaric, the reference to a lack of respect for the gods and the king in Sargon II's

inscription should probably not be interpreted simply as a reference to non-submission to the king and the god Aššur in a strictly political sense—though that is undoubtedly included in the understanding of the expression. Rather, this statement should be understood as a polemical criticism of non-Assyrians’ cultures, in the sense that these non-Assyrians “do not know lordship” and do not know how to worship the gods properly, similar to the description of the Gutians in the *Weidner Chronicle*. All of these themes seem to be reinforced in the visual iconography of foreigners as well.¹³¹

Rebellion

Sargon II’s inscription about “fear of god and king” also indicates that when a Neo-Assyrian king polemicizes against a nation for insurrection, the rebellion is probably understood as a reflection of the people’s inferior religious and social practices. Of course, the act of rebellion itself constitutes impiety because it defies the will of the god Aššur. But if the polemics against people who rebel against Assyria are looked at in the context of other texts characterizing the inferiority of peripheral peoples, the act of rebellion or treaty violation is a reflection of the enemy’s culture. The willingness of the rebel nation to break away from Assyria means that it has reverted back to its barbaric ways. Thus, the polemical characterizations of rebels are not simply reactions to the act of rebellion itself, but invoke a sense of inferiority thought to characterize the periphery.

At times, Neo-Assyrian kings refer to the enemy who rebels as “people who possessed neither sense nor judgment.”¹³² It would appear as though this terminology refers back to Sargon II’s inscription suggesting that those that the Assyrian empire brought into submission were inferior. The “sense” of the enemy only becomes civilized under the thumb of Assyria. Once the enemy arrogantly (*takālu*)¹³³ attempts to remove that yoke, their “senselessness” comes into relief again. Of course, rebellion against Assyria usually involves breaking a treaty that the conquered people previously signed (a “Godfather”-style “offer they can’t refuse”). And the inscriptions are sure to point out that their violation of the oath reflects the people’s generally immoral, wicked character.¹³⁴

It is critical to point out that the inherent inferiority of foreigners is tied to their portrayal in Neo-Assyrian texts about rebellious peoples because a number of scholars make submission to the king paramount in Neo-Assyrian caricatures of foreigners. Indeed, Assyrian concepts foreignness do reflect the imaginings of an imperial society that aspired to hegemony over the entire known world. At the same time, submission to the Assyrian king is part and parcel of a civilized way of life that included correct worship, proper political structures (officials and overseers), and urban life (no tents, away from harsh, inhospitable terrains, civilized food, proper burials). To reject Assyria was to reject a civilized way of life and the “right” way to live.

Cimmerians

The theme of the rebellious enemy and its connection with overall Assyrian ideologies of foreigners seems to come together in the case of the Cimmerians (*Gimirru*), a people who may have been located near the Caucasus mountains, even further north than Urartu. In fact, Neo-Assyrian texts deploy the term “Manda horde” to describe the Cimmerians. One of Esarhaddon’s royal prisms mentions Teupšaya, king of the “Cimmerian Manda horde, whose abode is distant,”¹³⁵ recalling the description of Hanigalbat in the *Sargon Geography* and descriptions of enemies in legends of the Akkadian king. Esarhaddon claims to have defeated Teupšaya in battle. Aššurbanipal’s dedicatory inscription for Marduk refers to a certain Tugdammê as the king of the Manda horde, who are the offspring of Tiamat, likeness of a [...]”¹³⁶ Usually the missing word is restored as ^d*gallû* (= *gallû* demon) because Esarhaddon elsewhere refers to enemy kings as *gallû* demons. If *gallû* is the missing word, then Aššurbanipal’s dedicatory inscription seems to portray the Cimmerians like the portrayal of the enemies in the *Cuthean Legend of Naram-Sin*. Here, the inscription refers to the Cimmerians as offspring of Tiāmat, just as the enemies in the *Cuthean Legend* were created by Tiāmat and Bēlet-ilī.

Also similar to the *Cuthean Legend*, the Cimmerians are referred to as the “brood of destruction” (*zēr ḫalqati*). The earliest Neo-Assyrian use of “brood of destruction” appears in a conflict between Esarhaddon and the Cimmerians. The Cimmerians pledge not to interfere with Esarhaddon’s campaign to Mamea, but Esarhaddon does not believe they will follow through because, according to him, they are notorious oath-breakers. Because they cannot follow oaths, Esarhaddon exclaims that the gods will eventually destroy them: “they are the seed of destruction; oath of a god or treaty, they know not!”¹³⁷ Tugdammê, the leader of the Cimmerians, is also referred to as “brood of destruction”¹³⁸ in an inscription in the Ištar temple, and Aššurbanipal’s description of Tugdammê as “offspring of Tiamat,” noted above, is due to Tugdammê’s violation of an oath. The consequence of violating the oath, according to Aššurbanipal’s inscription for Marduk, is that Marduk scatters Tugdammê’s forces.

Ethnic foreigners in Mesopotamian texts

Are Mesopotamian texts that depict the Gutians, the Amorites, the Cimmerians and others constructing “ethnic groups” in their descriptions? According to my own understanding of ethnic group perception, it would seem that in many cases they are. Mesopotamian texts seem to use both geographic terminology and terminology related to descent and heredity to describe foreigners or natives. The most common term to describe members of an ethnic group is the term *māru* (DUMU), or “son” (e.g., “sons of Assyria,

mārē māt Aššur, in Sargon II’s inscription above). In addition, many of the Sumerian texts cited above describe inhabitants of a particular geographic local as “son of GN” (**dumu** GN). Since *māru* and **dumu** can, like the Hebrew word *bēn*, simply refer to membership in a class or group of people who are not necessarily related in a familial sense, one cannot use this term alone as unequivocal evidence of ethnic group perception in the text.¹³⁹ In addition, none of the texts that I assessed in this chapter use other familial terms, such as “house” (*é* or *bītu*) or “kin group” (**im-ri-[a]**, Akkadian: *kimtu*), to describe foreigners.

The word “seed” (*zēru*), a term that has explicit genealogical connotations, seems to better demonstrate that these texts communicate a concept of ethnicity in their descriptions of foreigners (e.g., *zēr ḥalqāti*). Also, the *Lament Over Sumer and Ur* states that the Gutians “issued their seed (**numun**)” in the land (line 146), demonstrating a possible genealogical connection between group members. In the *Cuthean Legend of Naram-Sin* as well as Neo-Assyrian references to the Cimmerians, certain foreigners were thought to be special creations of Tiamat, created at a specific point in time for a specific purpose. While these enemies are thought to be human, they do not have the same origin as the rest of human beings, who, presumably were created after the defeat of Tiamat. Rhetorically, it seems, even if the progenitresses of the Cimmerians and the unnamed enemies in the *Cuthean Legend* were goddesses, having the same mothers could imply a kind of genealogical link.

The fact that group members share physical features, in some cases, might also suggest that a concept of ethnicity is at work. The enemies in the *Cuthean Legend* were said to have ornithoid features, and the enemies in the *Curse of Akkad*, who were not said to be creations of Tiamat, supposedly had physical features of monkeys. Recall that in the *Curse of Akkad*, **sig-alan** refers to the *physical* likeness of the Gutians. Scholars have long puzzled over the meaning of these animalistic descriptors, but Adalı argues that the physical descriptions of the Gutians are not to be taken literally. Rather, the animalistic descriptions of the Gutians’ physical appearance could suggest that the writers wanted to present them as people with physical “deformities.”¹⁴⁰ The omen series *Šumma Izbu* describes a number of birth “deformities” that are said to actually *be* animals’ body parts:

If a woman gives birth and (the child) has the ear of a lion—there will be a harsh king in the land...

If a woman gives birth and (the child) has the beak of a bird—that land will be laid waste.

If a woman gives birth and (the child) has the beak of a turtle-dove—that land will decrease (in size).

If a woman gives birth and (the child) has the beak of a *ḥūqu* bird—end of the reign—that land will decrease (in size), will be scattered.¹⁴¹

The Old Babylonian versions of *Šumma Izbu*, in contrast to the Neo-Assyrian version from Aššurbanipal’s palace upon which most of Leichty’s edition is based, use the word “like/as” (*kīma*) in the protasis of these kinds of omens, indicating that the descriptions in the Neo-Assyrian version are metaphorical.¹⁴² The newborn does not literally have a lion’s ear, but the child’s ear may, in some way, be reminiscent of a lion’s ear. *Šumma Izbu* mentions the “beak” or nose of a raven (KIR₄ UGA = *appī āribe*), the same bird with which the faces of Naram-Sin’s Manda horde were compared, as a birth deformity that portends pestilence.¹⁴³

Even though the texts may not suggest that the Gutians literally have the features of monkeys or that the enemies in the *Cuthean Legend* literally have cave-bird bodies, the selection of these animals might be significant. Some Mesopotamian texts, such as the *Babylonian Map of the World*, place exotic creatures in faraway lands. The choice of monkeys as a description of the Gutians’ features may have been a way of reinforcing the foreign nature of the Gutians, since the monkey is one of the exotic animal species that the *Babylonian Map of the World* claims lives on the islands across the Great Sea (*marratu*), in the far reaches of the world.¹⁴⁴ The cave-bird, the bird to which the bodies of the enemy of the *Cuthean Legend* are compared, may have been a bird that was thought to be particularly defiling in a ritual sense. A remedy for the *bu’šānu* disease, dating from the Late Babylonian period says that an afflicted person should “draw water from the wide sea, where an unclean (*urruštu*) woman has not washed her hands, an unclean (*usakkatu*) woman has not washed her clothes, a cave bird has not beclouded (*dāhu*), a black dog has not marred.”¹⁴⁵ The cave-bird seems to be grouped with an unclean woman and the presence of this bird in the water would make it unclean and useless for the remedy.

In addition, the Manda horde’s bird features might be invoking the omen traditions. Of course, the presence of birds is often a bad omen, but the birth of people and animals with deformities, especially deformities that appear as bird parts, is also a terrible portent. While it may be unrealistic to suggest that the composers of the *Curse of Akkad* and the *Cuthean Legend* had *Šumma izbu* in mind when they retold these stories, it is certainly very interesting that Naram-Sin’s Manda horde was said to have been created by the Great Goddess with these features, considering that they left so much destruction in their wake. If the references to simian and ornithoid features are in fact references to deformed physical features, these texts seem to support the connection between deformities and disaster articulated in omen texts.

Neo-Assyrian texts seem to draw on many of the themes laid out in earlier Mesopotamian texts. The portrayal of the foreigner who lives in dangerous faraway places, and the idea that foreign places and peoples should be dominated was present in legends about Sargonic kings, Enmerkar and Lugalbanda. The idea that certain foreigners from the periphery are technologically, socially and religiously inferior also comes through in Neo-Assyrian

texts. Most important, the foreigner who displays these inferior lifestyles deserves to be conquered and brought under the yoke of Assyria. Those who resist defy the divine will and their insolence is portrayed as a reflection of their defective mental character as foreign peoples.

As I argue in Chapter Two, not all concepts of foreignness are concepts of *ethnic* foreignness; only discourses about foreigners that make common ancestry important can be considered “ethnic.” And not every Neo-Assyrian text explicitly mentions the common ancestry of foreigners. For example, the *Sargon Geography* and caricatures of rebellious foreigners do not highlight the descent or heredity of peripheral peoples. In order to hold that ethnic group perception lies behind these texts—that these texts construct rebellious foreigners as ethnic groups—we would need to assume they shared the assumptions of other texts, such as descriptions of the Cimmerians or the Gutians, which do refer to ancestry in some sense. However, the Cimmerians and Gutians seem to be special cases because they are part of the “dangerous mountain peoples” motif, and it is unclear whether all foreigners in Neo-Assyrian texts fit this profile. It seems, then, that dangerous mountain peoples are clearly constructed as ethnic groups, but other peoples might be simply, “foreigners.” The Neo-Assyrian texts that fulminate against rebellious peoples and kings are bitterly xenophobic, but because they do not emphasize the common ancestry of the rebels, they may not portray all these foreigners as *ethnic* foreigners. Of course, just because some texts do not depict ethnic foreigners does not mean that there is no essentializing, entitativity or stereotyping. Those elements are certainly present. I do strongly *suspect* that ethnic conceptualizations lie behind Neo-Assyrian xenophobia. By associating rebellious foreigners with the periphery, they may be implicitly alluding to all of the themes found in the dangerous mountain people motif. Nevertheless, the inexplicitness of the texts prompts me to conclude that some Neo-Assyrian portrayals of foreigners are “merely” xenophobic.

Notes

- 1 Chapter Two, pp. 26–7.
- 2 Govert van Driel, “Ethnicity, How to Cope with the Subject,” in *Ethnicity in Mesopotamia* (ed. W.H. van Soldt et al.; RAI 48; Leiden: Nederlands Instituut voor het Nabije Oosten, 2005), 1.
- 3 Zainab Bahrani, “Race and Ethnicity in Mesopotamian Antiquity,” *World Archaeology* 38 (2006): 55–6.
- 4 Volkert Haas, “Die Dämonisierung des Fremden und des Feindes im Alten Orient,” *Rocznik Orientalistyczny* 41 (1980): 40. Haas points to the annals of Aššurnasirpal II which classify the speech of the Hurrians and Lullubians (a dangerous mountain people) as high-pitched, sibilant (lispy?), chirpy and effeminate: “In den Ohren der Assyrier hatte die Sprache der Hurriter oder Lullubäer einen hochtonigen zischenden, bzw. einen zwitschernden Klang. So heißt es in den Annalen Assurnasirpals, daß die Leute von Zipirmena im Lande Zamua ‘wie die Weiber zwitschern.’” Haas refers

- to L. Oppenheim, “Zu den fremdsprachigen Personennamen aus Nuzi,” *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes* 44 (1937): 188. But Oppenheim does not cite the passage. The relevant passage appears to be line 97: “šá KUR [si]-pí-a-me-na šá GIM MUNUS.MEŠ-te-šap-ru-ni” (from A. Kirk Grayson, *Assyrian Rulers of the Early First Millennium BC I [1114–859 BC]* [RIMA 2; Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991], 248). Understanding the verb, *šepēru* as “to speak” or a way of speaking (“zwitschern”) is common in translations of this passage (for English, see Daniel D. Luckenbill, *Ancient Records of Assyria and Babylonia* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1926], 153; A.J. Olmstead, “The Calculated Frightfulness of Ashur-Nasir-Pal,” *JAOS* 38 [1918]: 235). The verb is also translated, “to fix (hair)” (CAD, Š, 132–3) and this is precisely how Grayson renders it. To “speak” possibly comes from translators’ interpretation of another meaning of *šepēru*, “to press” the lips.
- 5 Cristina de Bernardi, “Methodological Problems in the Approach to Ethnicity in Ancient Mesopotamia,” in W.H. van Soldt et al., *Ethnicity in Ancient Mesopotamia*, 85.
 - 6 *Ibid.*, 86.
 - 7 *Ibid.* However, de Bernardi does not define ethnicity.
 - 8 J.N. Postgate, *Early Mesopotamia: Society and Economy at the Dawn of History*. (London: Routledge, 1992), 122; *idem*, “Royal Ideology and State Administration in Sumer and Akkad,” *CANE* 1, 399, 401; Tonia M. Sharlach, *Provincial Taxation and the Ur III State* (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 6–17. Sharlach points out that only Ur III “provinces” paid the **bala**. There is some ambiguity about whether some cities were considered “provinces,” such as those in the Diyala region (Ešnunna, Išim-Šulgi), which paid both the tax levied on peripheral regions (**gún ma-da**) and the **bala**. However, it is probably safe to say that the core of the Ur III state “stretched from the marshy regions of the south only as far north as Sippar (or possibly the Diyala region around Ešnunna)” (*ibid.*, 6). **bala** is a term relevant for Ur III political organization, but since Ur III bureaucrats were the first ones to have recorded the literary narratives about the kings of Akkad, such as the *Curse of Akkad*, an Ur III term seems appropriate to describe at least one important perspective on landscape in Mesopotamia.
 - 9 Bahrani, “Race,” 48–59.
 - 10 See my critique of the use of the “Other” in Chapter One. Bahrani sees Mesopotamian discourse about foreigners as “a discourse of the other” (“Race and Ethnicity,” 49).
 - 11 Lines 2–3, 27 of the composite edition of the *Sargon Geography* found in Wayne Horowitz, *Mesopotamian Cosmic Geography* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2002), 69. Horowitz’s composite text is comprised of two first millennium Neo-Assyrian tablets (VAT 8006) and a Late Babylonian tablet (BM 64382 + 82955) (*ibid.*, 68). See also A.K. Grayson, “The Empire of Sargon of Akkad,” *Afo* 25 (1974–1977): 58–9.
 - 12 Peter Machinist, “Assyrians on Assyria in the First Millennium BCE,” in *Anfänge politischen Denkens in der Antike* (ed. Kurt Raaflaub; SHKK 24; Munich: Oldenbourg, 1993), 83; Simo Parpola, *Neo-Assyrian Toponyms* (Alter Orient und Altes Testament 6; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Butzon & Bercker, 1970), 103–4, 183.
 - 13 As Piotr Michalowski points out, the distinction between “nomad” and city-dweller was probably not clear-cut and definitive. In Syria, at least, “there was a back and forth movement between settled and semimobile ways of life” (*The Correspondence*

- of the Kings of Ur: An Epistolary History of a Mesopotamian Kingdom* [Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2011], 90). He further cautions against polar oppositions between “sedentary” and “non-sedentary” ways of life. See also Bertile Lyonner, “L’occupation des marges arides de la Djéziré: pastoralisme et nomadisme aux débuts de 3ème du 2ème millénaire,” in *Conquête de la steppe et appropriation des terres sur les marges arides du croissant fertile* (ed. Bernard Geyer; Lyon: Maison de l’Orient Méditerranéen-Jen Pouilloux, 2001), 363–76; idem, “Le nomadisme et l’archéologie: problèmes d’identification. Le cas de la partie Occidentale de la Djéziré aux 3ème et 2ème millénaire avant notre ère,” in *Nomades et sédentaires dans le Proche-Orient ancien* (ed. Christophe Nicolle; RAI 46; Paris: Editions Recherche sur les Civilisations, 2004), 25–49; Anne Porter, “The Dynamics of Death: Ancestors, Pastoralism and the Origins of a Third Millennium City in Syria,” *BASOR* 325 (2002): 1–36; eadem, “The Urban Nomad: Countering Old Clichés” in *Nomades et sédentaires*, 69–74.
- 14 For a collection of professions that various identified “Amorites” had in the Ur III period, see Giorgio Buccellati, *Amorites of the Ur III Period* (Naples: Instituto Orientale di Napoli, 1966), 340–4. Amorites also started important royal dynasties, such as the Old Babylonian dynasty of Šumu-la-ēl, of which the most famous descendant is Hammurapi. Michalowski has a good discussion of the problems with positing that the Amorites were “nomads” in the modern sense of the word (*Correspondence*, 90–3).
 - 15 See Aage Westenholz, “The Old Akkadian Period: History and Culture,” in *Mesopotamien: Akkade-Zeit und Ur III Zeit* (ed. Pascal Attinger and Markus Wafar; OBO 160/3; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1999), 34–59 for a history of the early Akkadian kings (also known as the Old Akkadian period).
 - 16 On the debates on what genre best describes literature about the early kings of Akkad, see Joan G. Westenholz, *Legends of the Kings of Akkade* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1997), 2–17. There are some useful genre distinctions, such as the “autobiographical” format, in which the king narrates the story of his exploits from his own perspective, but I am not particularly invested in what to call these stories about the kings of Akkad (“legends,” *narû* literature, mythic texts, etc.).
 - 17 A copy of “Sargon: King of Battle” (SR 12223 = VAT 10290 = VAS 12 193 = EA 359) was found at Tell el-Amarna, written in “one of the western peripheral dialects” which reflects “features of the Syro-Anatolian dialects of Akkadian.” See Westenholz, *Legends*, 105–6.
 - 18 Such as the Hittite version of the *Cuthean Legend of Naram-Sin* (Bo 1309). See Harry Hoffner, “Remarks on the Hittite Version of the Naram-Sin Legend,” *JCS* 23 (1970): 17–22.
 - 19 The most famous example is perhaps the tradition of Moses floating down the Nile in a basket, which is similar to the story of Sargon’s en-priestess mother floating him down the Euphrates in a basket and his later discovery by a water-drawer. See “Sargon Birth Legend,” lines 5–13, in Westenholz, *Legends*, 40–1.
 - 20 Assyriologists debate whether or not Sargon had the world’s first empire or Lugalzagesi, his Early Dynastic predecessor. Aage Westenholz argues that earlier kings such as Eannatum and Lugalzagesi (from whom Sargon wrested control) cannot compare to Sargon. Westenholz says that Lugalzagesi did not record military conquests, did not tear down fortifications or install Urukians as **ensis**. Lugalzagesi and other Early Dynastic kings were normal **lugal kiengi** (“The Old Akkadian Period: History and Culture” in Walther Sallaberger and Westenholz,

- Mesopotamien*, 40). Jean-Jacques Glassner contends that it is difficult to distinguish between “prestige” and “power” in the pre-Sargonic period, but that Lugalzagesi broke the equilibrium between the cities and marked a turning point because he at least had the objective of hegemony over other city states (*La chute d’Akkad: sa événement et sa mémoire* [Berlin: Dietrich Reimer Verlag, 1986], 7). C.J. Gadd notes that “a wider prospect than local domination is opened for the first time with Lugalzaggisi...he proclaimed that not only had the god given him kingship over the land (**kalam**, i.e., Sumer) and directed the eye of the land upon him, but also that he rendered the foreign lands (**kur-kur**) subject at his foot from the rising sun to the setting he had bowed the neck (of all) to him” (“The Dynasty of Agade and the Gutian Invasion” [CAH; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971], 420–1).
- 21 And some Old and Middle Assyrian kings also seem to have been enamored by the early rulers of Akkad, showing that legends about them were influential in Mesopotamian thought in all periods. Šamši-Adad I (1813–1781 BCE) was said to have made pilgrimages to Akkad as did his son, Yasmah-Adad. See Georges Dossin, *Archives Royales de Mari* 1 (Paris: P. Geuthner, 1946), 36:5; Westenholz, *Legends*, 2.
 - 22 Gonzalo Rubio, “Scribal Secrets and Antiquarian Nostalgia: Tradition and Scholarship in Ancient Mesopotamia,” in *Reconstructing a Distant Past: Ancient Near Eastern Essays in Tribute to Jorge R. Silva Castillo* (ed. Diego A. Barreyra Fracaroli, and Gregorio del Olmo Lete; Barcelona: Editorial Ausa, 2009), 157.
 - 23 Allison K. Thomason, *Luxury and Legitimation: Royal Collection in Ancient Mesopotamia* (Aldershot, N.H.: Ashgate, 2005).
 - 24 Rubio, “Scribal Secrets,” 157–61, 168–73.
 - 25 Jeremy Black, “The Sumerians in Their Landscape,” in *Riches Hidden in Secret Places: Ancient Near Eastern Studies in Memory of Thorkild Jacobsen* (ed. Tzvi Abusch; Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2002), 45–51.
 - 26 Herman L.J. Vanstiphout, *Epics of Sumerian Kings: The Matter of Aratta* (ed. Jerrold S. Cooper; Leiden: Brill, 2004), 1. Vanstiphout notes that the story probably dates from the earlier Ur III period. All of the texts about the early kings of Uruk can probably be dated to the Isin-Larsa period.
 - 27 (Sumerian: **saĝ-gig₂[-ga]**; Akkadian: *šalmāt qaqqadi*) “Black headed” people refers humanity in general and the inhabitants of the world, and while the expression cannot be correlated with any particular language or national group, this term might, in some specific contexts, have “ethnic” connotations (see discussion in Bahrani, “Race and Ethnicity,” 54). *Enūma Eliš* refers to the human beings created by the gods after the defeat of Tiamat as “black-headed” people (VI 107). In other stories, which I will discuss later, certain mountain peoples seem to have been created long after the postdiluvian period specifically for the purposes of punishment. The separate creation story for these mountain peoples may suggest that there is a difference between the “black-headed” peoples and these specially created mountain folks. However, there are certainly texts suggesting that the expression “black-headed people” refers to all of humanity. See, e.g., “Sargon Birth Legend” line 24, which seems to suggest that the black-headed people are all of Sargon’s subjects, i.e., the whole world, including the mountains, which he conquered (Westenholz, *Legends*, 45). Neo-Assyrian examples can be found in *CAD* S, 76. Taking the “black-headed” as a phenotypic descriptor (i.e., dark hair or skin color) is extremely problematic (see *ibid.*).

- 28 See “Lugalbanda in the Mountain Cave,” at Jeremy Black, Graham Cunningham, Esther Fluckiger-Hawker, Eleanor Robson, and Gábor Zólyomi, *ETCSL* (<http://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk/section1/tr1821.htm>), Oxford 1998–2013, lines 1–19.
- 29 Though there are no existing manuscripts that predate the first millennium BCE. See Horowitz, *Cosmic Geography*, 108. See also the composite text of Philippe Talon, *The Standard Babylonian Creation Myth: Enūma Eliš* (SAACT 4; Helsinki: Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project, 2005), lines 129–46.
- 30 For translations, see “Enki and the World Order” at Black et al., *ETCSL* (<http://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk/section1/tr113.htm>), lines 250–58; For another translation, see Black, “Sumerians,” 49.
- 31 In stories such as *Enki’s Journey to Nippur* and *Nanna-Suen’s Journey to Nippur*. See Black, “Sumerians,” 47; Black et al., *ETCSL* (<http://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk/cgi-bin/etcsl.cgi?text=t.1.1.4#>); idem, *ETCSL* (<http://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk/cgi-bin/etcsl.cgi?text=t.1.5.1#>).
- 32 Though the *Sargon Geography*, especially the ethnographic information, was ultimately composed in the Neo-Assyrian period, much of the material may date to the Old Babylonian period. See Horowitz, “Moab and Edom in the Sargon Geography,” *IEJ* 43 (1993): 152; idem, *Cosmic Geography*, 92–3; A.K. Grayson, “The Empire of Sargon of Akkad” *AfO* 25 (1974–77): 57; G.J.P. McEwan, “The Sargon Geography,” *Revue d’assyriologie et d’archéologie orientale* 74 (1980): 171–3; Mario Liverani “The Sargon Geography and the Late Assyrian Mensuration of the Earth,” *SAAB* 13 (1999–2001): 57–85.
- 33 See BM 92687, the “Babylonian Map of the World”; Horowitz is the leading scholar on this document (“The Babylonian Map of the World,” *Iraq* 50 [1988]: 147–65; idem, *Cosmic Geography*, 29–39).
- 34 The precise location of these lands is debated by Assyriologists. For my purposes, the importance of these locales is that they provided raw materials and exotic goods for powerful states and were regarded as very distant lands.
- 35 Horowitz, *Cosmic Geography*, 35.
- 36 The suburban landscape also posed dangers. Black calls attention to the growth of wild grass, called the *šumunda* grass, which was useful for making baskets, boats and makeshift shelters, but grew like a weed and required a great deal of labor to remove. It also seems to have been extremely flammable in the dry summer months. The *šumunda* grass is paradigmatic of a “set of human responses to the rural landscape—uncultivated, full of wild vegetation, maybe dangerous in hot, dry weather, but nevertheless lived near and worked beside” (Black, “Sumerians,” 57). Haas also relates that the steppe along with the mountains is seen as a treacherous place where demons reside (Haas, “Dämonisierung,” 38). The steppe also plays a role in negative depictions of foreigners during the Neo-Assyrian period (see below).
- 37 Though note that the Amorites were perceived to have eventually moved to a land east of the Tigris, making them easterners whose origins were in the west. A hymn says that the god Amurru was “the first born of the gods of Anšan” and the Šitti-Marduk *kudurru* from the reign of Nebuchadnezzar I associates the land of Amurru with the land of the Kassites and Lullubu during a campaign against Elam. Amurru extends from Lebanon to east of the Tigris in the *Sargon Geography* as well. See discussion in Paul-Alain Beaulieu, “The God Amurru as Emblem of Ethnic and Cultural Identity?” in *Ethnicity in Mesopotamia*, 40.
- 38 Black, “Sumerians,” 56.

- 39 Piotr Michalowski, “Maybe Epic: The Origins and Reception of Sumerian Epic Poetry,” in *Epic and History* (ed. Kurt Raaflaub and David Konstan; Malden, Mass.: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 13.
- 40 Lines 23, 404. In Akkadian, **ki-bal** is rendered *māt nukurti* (“enemy country”) (CAD, N/2, 329).
- 41 See “Enmerkar and the Lord of Aratta” at Black et al., *ETCSL* (<http://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk/section1/tr1823.htm>), lines 160–71; For another translation, see Vanstiphout, *Epics*, 66–7. See also Catherine Mittermayer, *Enmerkara und der Herr von Arata: Ein ungleicher Wettstreit* (OBO 239; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2009), 124–5. The “seven mountains” formulation strikes me as a way of conveying “a very long way” in the mountains. See Yousef Majidzadeh, “The Land of Aratta,” *JNES* 35 (1976): 109. Majidzadeh seems to believe that Aratta is located in the region of the Kerman range of the Zagros mountains. It was probably thought to be somewhere in the Zagros mountains because of the mention of Anšan in the story (lines 75, 110, 166).
- 42 Translation from “Lord of Aratta,” at Black et al., *ETCSL*, lines 243–7; For another translation, see Vanstiphout, *Epics*, 71 and Mittermayer, *Enmerkara*, 129.
- 43 A common stereotype of Amorites is that they “do not know grain” (**še nu-zu**), presumably a reference to both the absence of agriculture and bizarre diet. The probability that “not knowing grain” refers to their diet is supported by another reference, the “Marriage of Martu,” which claims that the Amorites, represented by their national god Amurru, eat raw meat and dig up raw mushrooms from the foot of the mountains (SEM 58: iv 26–7; Buccellati, *Amorites*, 330–2). Another interesting text says, “They have prepared wheat and grain as confection, but the Amorite will eat it without even recognizing what it contains,” suggesting that Amorites are wholly unfamiliar with normal Mesopotamian staples (E.I. Gordon, “A New Look at the Wisdom of Sumer and Akkad,” *BiOr* 17 [1960]: 131. Referenced by Buccellati, *Amorites*, 331). It seems as though the people of Aratta also gather their food, but do not have a particularly abnormal diet, which consists of wheat and pulses.
- 44 Though metalworking may have also been associated with foreignness and witchcraft. Haas, “Dämonisierung,” 39.
- 45 Westenholz, “Heroes of Akkad,” *JAOS* 103 (1983): 333.
- 46 Westenholz, *Legends*, 43.
- 47 *Ibid.*, 77.
- 48 MAH 10829, line 3, 10–11; MAH 10829 is an Old Babylonian text, seemingly based partially on one of Naram-Sin’s actual inscriptions. Westenholz, *Legends*, 241. For the relationship between MAH 10829 and Old Babylonian copies of Naram-Sin’s inscriptions, see Steve Tinney, “A New Look at Naram-Sin and the Great Rebellion,” *JCS* 47 (1995): 1–14.
- 49 Douglas Frayne, *Sargonic and Gutian Periods* (RIME 2; Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993), E2.1.1.11, 9–13.
- 50 Frayne, *RIME* 2, E2.1.4.1, ii 6–7; E2.1.4.5, ii 5–7; E2 1.4.11, 3–4; E2 1.4.13, i 4–5; E2 1.4.23, 3–4.
- 51 Enlil “increased wisdom for him” (*uznam uwattiršu*).
- 52 A Neo-Assyrian fragment was found at Aššur; Hittite fragments were found as well (Westenholz, *Legends*, 102). See discussion in Shlomo Izreel, *Amarna Scholarly Tablets* (Cuneiform Monographs 9; Groningen: Styx, 1997), 71–2.
- 53 CAD, K, 462.

- 54 MAH 10829, “The Great Revolt Against Naram-Sin” (Westenholz, *Legends*, 241–2).
- 55 That is, the Mari version, A 1252 (*ibid.*, 233).
- 56 Westenholz notes that the use of the sign SA to represent /ša/ (root =šullulu) is a peculiarity of OA and Mari Akkadian.
- 57 Even though the composers of these traditions may not have been contemporary with Naram-Sin, the fact that the stories praise him shows that the authors identified with him in some way.
- 58 Westenholz, *Legends*, 199–200.
- 59 *Ibid.*, 261.
- 60 Some scholars suggest that this story is a parody, but Bendt Alster and Takayoshi Oshima argue that the “letter” is part of an oral tradition that developed about Sargon that, like later heroic literature such as the *Alexander Romance*, “combines historical deeds with features of fairy tales, including written records as well as orally transmitted tales” (“Sargonic Dinner at Kaneš: The Old Akkadian Sargon Letter,” *Iraq* 69 [2007]: 8).
- 61 *Ibid.*, 10–1, lines 50–61.
- 62 “Enmerkar and the Lord of Aratta,” at Black et al., *ETCSL*, lines 179–207.
- 63 Or, perhaps during the reigns of the obscure kings Dudu and Šu-Durul, the last kings before “the reign of Akkad was abolished” according to the Sumerian King List (Jean-Jacques Glassner, *Mesopotamian Chronicles* [Atlanta: SBL Press, 2004], 125). Glassner uses a version of SKL (which he refers to as the “Chronicle of the Single Monarchy”) dating from the Isin-Larsa/Old-Babylonian period. There was also a period of political strife in which four kings seem to have vied for power before the ascension of Dudu. For Dudu’s and Šu-Durul’s inscriptions see Frayne, *RIME* 2, 210–7.
- 64 Gadd, “Dynasty,” 437, 440. All of the information about the murders comes from later omen texts, and the historicity of these stories is uncertain. They were reportedly either murdered with cylinder seals or sealed tablets. See also Glassner, *Chute*, 68.
- 65 Glassner, *Chute*, 61.
- 66 See Frayne, *RIME* 2, 183; F. Thureau-Dangin, *Recueil des tablettes chaldéens* (RTC) (Paris: E. Leroux, 1903), no. 118.
- 67 Translation taken from Piotr Michalowski, *Letters from Early Mesopotamia* (SBLWAW 3; Atlanta: SBL Press, 1993), 27–8 (22). For other translations, see Jørgen Læssøe, *People of Ancient Assyria: Their Inscriptions and Correspondence* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1963), 29 and A. Leo Oppenheim, *Letters from Mesopotamia* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967), 71–2.
- 68 “Sumerian King List” at Black et al., *ETCSL* (<http://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk/section2/tr211.htm>), lines 308–44; See also Glassner, *Mesopotamian Chronicles*, 124–5; Thorkild Jacobsen, *The Sumerian King List* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1939), 117–21.
- 69 Frayne, *RIME* 2, 222–7; Also, Ignace J. Gelb and Burkhard Kienast, *Die altakkadischen Königsschriften des dritten Jahrtausends v. Chr.* (FAS 7; Stuttgart: F. Steiner, 1990), 293–316.
- 70 For an example of how scribes often introduced their own interpretations into the copying of inscriptions in the Old Babylonian period especially with respect to epithets, see Tinney, “Great Rebellion,” 4–14.
- 71 William W. Hallo, “Gutium,” *RIA*, 713–4.

- 72 Ibid., 711.
- 73 Perhaps when Ur-Nammu reestablished the temple of Enlil at Nippur. Glassner, *Chute*, 70. Glassner speculates that the story was a negative commentary composed by the priests of Nippur as a reaction against the empire of Akkad, using the chief god of the Sumerian pantheon, Enlil, as a foil against Naram-Sin.
- 74 Translations of the *Curse of Akkad* will be taken from Jerrold S. Cooper, *The Curse of Agade* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1983), unless otherwise noted.
- 75 Westenholz, *Legends*, 195, line 26.
- 76 Literally, “not placed [as a] people” **si** = **sig** (“to place”).
- 77 Cooper, *Curse*, 58, lines 155–7.
- 78 CAD, R, 99–101, 103–4 (D-Stem, *rukkusu*).
- 79 CAD lists **sa-alan** and **uktin** (the latter is a reading of the former) as the logographic equivalent of *bunnannu* (CAD, B, 317). Logographically, **sa**₇ = **sig**₇.
- 80 See “**uktin**,” ePSD (<http://psd.museum.upenn.edu>); CAD, B, 317.
- 81 CAD, B, 318.
- 82 CAD, T, 85–97.
- 83 CAD, M/II, 66–9.
- 84 CAD, T, 85; “**galga**” ePSD (<http://psd.museum.upenn.edu>).
- 85 See Agnes Spycket, “‘Le Carnaval des Animaux’: On Some Musician Monkeys in the Ancient Near East,” *Iraq* 60 (1998): 2, Figs. 2–5. There amulets featuring monkeys were also found at the archaic level of Warka (Uruk) and at the grave of Meskalam-Šar at Ur (R.D. Barnett, “Monkey Business,” *JANES* 5 [1973]: 3).
- 86 Spycket, “Le Carnaval,” 3; Barnett, “Monkey Business,” 3.
- 87 Barnett, “Monkey Business,” 3 n. 19. Of course, too much should not be read into this example because talking animals are major characters in numerous folk tales. However, the monkey is *writing*, which is a peculiarly human activity and a marker of civilized life in Mesopotamia.
- 88 Spycket, “Le Carnaval,” 3–5. Spycket suggests that wind instruments were not prestigious instruments, especially in the royal court and speculates that having monkeys play wind instruments was a way of making fun of certain kinds of musicians.
- 89 Rykle Borger, *Beiträge zum Inschriftenwerk Assurbanipals: Die Prismenklassen: A, B, C = K, D, E, F, G, H, J und T sowie andere Schriften* (Wiesbaden: Harrasowitz, 1996), 62. Thanks to Saul M. Olyan, “Jehoiakim’s Dehumanizing Internment as an Act of Ritual Reclassification” Unpublished Draft, 6, for this reference.
- 90 Of course, when it comes to Neo-Assyrian royal inscriptions, one should not assume that they are historically accurate. Even if the descriptions of the humiliation of foreign kings does not always reflect a historical event, the *portrayal* of these punishments clearly had some significance.
- 91 Piotr Michalowski, *Lamentation over the City of Ur* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1989), 16–18.
- 92 Selim Ferruh Adalı, *The Scourge of God: The Ummān-Manda and Its Significance in the First Millennium BCE* (SAAS 20; Helsinki: Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project, 2011), 43.
- 93 Based on an inscription of “Anubanini, king of the Lullubians” found at Sar-i-Pūli-Zohāb (western Iran). See H. Klengel, “Lullubum,” *RIA*, 165. The geographic designations for the land of Lullubu place it in the east, from a Mesopotamian perspective, in the mountains. The *Sargon Geography* places Lullubu in the Zagros

- near Anšan (line 39; Horowitz, *Cosmic Geography*, 87). Hittite and Hurrian literature (KUB 27, 38 [CTH 775] Col IV 13f) mentions “king of the kings of the Lullubians” along with the kings of Tukriš and Elam, two eastern lands (Klengel, “Lullubum,” 165).
- 94 See Westenholz, *Legends*, 84–5.
- 95 Adalı, *Scourge*, 34.
- 96 Ibid., 37. Taken from a suggestion by Carl Bezold and Franz Boll, *Reflexe astrologischer Keilinschriften bei griechischen Schriftstellern* (Heidelberg: Carl Winters Universitätsbuchhandlung, 1911), 16, who translate *ummān dadmē* as “Leute von (festen) Wohnsitzen.” See also CAD, D, 18–20; *AHW*, 149.
- 97 Adalı, *Scourge*, 51.
- 98 Westenholz’s translation of *amēlūtu*, which should probably just be rendered “human beings.”
- 99 Westenholz, *Legends*, 309–10, lines 31–6. I will be using the Standard Babylonian version translated by Westenholz in this section.
- 100 Adalı, *Scourge*, 59.
- 101 Stephanie Dalley, *Myths from Mesopotamia* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000 [1989]), 237.
- 102 Translations range from “accursed breed,” “rebellious breed,” “ruinous breed,” “barbarians,” “perdition seed” and “vagabonds.” See Adalı, *Scourge*, 91.
- 103 Ibid.
- 104 Adalı translates *gullultu* as “sacrilegious offense,” a translation I am tempted to accept, but also one which seems contestable. The word *gullultu* appears to apply to any sin or offense, not just offenses against deities, though people can commit a *gullultu* against a deity (see *AHW*, 207, which renders the word “hostile dealings [feindselig Handeln]”). The word seems to stand in opposition to words such as “justice” (*kīttu*) and “good order”/“peace” (*šalmatu*), and is grouped with words like “falsehood”/“crime” (*sārtum*) (CAD, G, 131). Perhaps *gullultu* should be understood in this context as socially unjust acts (e.g., murder, cattle rustling and cannibalism).
- 105 The *Chronicle* seems to contain expressions found in Neo-Babylonian inscriptions, suggesting that the composition dates from that era. For details, al-Rawi, “Tablets,” 1–2; also A. Kirk Grayson, *Assyrian and Babylonian Chronicles* (Locus Valley, N.Y.: J.J. Augustin, 1975), 43, 145.
- 106 Al-Rawi’s translation (Farouk N.H. al-Rawi, “Tablets from the Sippar Library, I: The ‘Weidner Chronicle’: A Supposititious Royal Letter Concerning a Vision,” *Iraq* 52 [1990]: 9, lines 37–8). Also, Glassner, *Mesopotamian Chronicles*, 267.
- 107 *Qutū ša tazzimte; ilī palāḥa lā kullumu, parši ušurāti šutēšura lā īdū*. Translation based on Grayson’s edited version in *Assyrian and Babylonian Chronicles*, 43. There are variant passages in which *šuklulu* appears instead of *šutēšura* in reference to the Gutians (BM 47679 [unpublished]; CAD, Š/3, 224e; Grayson, *Assyrian and Babylonian Chronicles*, 57). Both of these words communicate that the Gutians could not “perform” rituals properly. The word *tazzimtu*, which means “complaint,” is translated “oppressive” by Grayson, but the meaning here seems uncertain (CAD, T, 303). Perhaps the expression *ša tazzimtē* denotes that the Gutians were the subject of frequent complaints about injustice.
- 108 Karel van der Toorn, *Sin and Sanction in Israel and Mesopotamia: A Comparative Study* (Studia Semitica Neerlandica; Maastricht: Van Gorcum, 1985), 38.

- 109 Only *man-da* appears with a break before. Most scholars reconstruct [ER]N *man-da*. See discussion in Adali, *Scourge*, 72.
- 110 Ibid., 72–3.
- 111 The problem of the “historical” Amorites is beyond the scope of this project. I am more interested in the rhetoric about them.
- 112 Translation taken from Beaulieu, “Amurru,” 41. Elsewhere, I will be using the ETCSL version. See Black et al., “Myth of Amurru” ETCSL (<http://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk/section1/c171.htm>). The original publication of “Myth of Amurru” can be found in SEM 58 = Edward Chiera, *Sumerian Epics and Myths* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1934).
- 113 Beaulieu, “Amurru,” 35. Beaulieu borrows this theory from Jean Robert Kupper, *L'iconographie du dieu Amurru dans la glyptique de la Ière dynastie babylonienne* (Classe des Lettres – Mémoires, Tome LV, fasc. 1; Brussels: Académie Royale de Belgique, 1961).
- 114 I understand **an-zil gu**, (“eat the taboo/abomination”) as eating food that was forbidden because it was supposed to be dedicated to a god. However, another possibility seems to be that the Amorites eat foods that Nanna hates. In the *Šurpu* anti-witchcraft texts, eating what is taboo to the gods is listed first as one of the sins from which a person must ask forgiveness in order to remove a curse. See Erica Reiner, *Šurpu: A Collection of Sumerian and Akkadian Incantations* (Osnabrück: Biblio Verlag, 1970), 13 (II.5).
- 115 OB texts understood **ní** as *puluhtu* (“fear/reverence”), a noun derived from the same root as “to fear/revere” (*palāhu*) used of the Gutians in the *Weidner Chronicle* (Rev. line 22, see al-Rawi, “Tablets,” 6) (CAD, P, 505–6).
- 116 Marta Rivaroli and Lorenzo Verderame, “To Be a Non-Assyrian,” in W.H. van Soldt et al., *Ethnicity in Mesopotamia*, 297.
- 117 Kenton L. Sparks, *Ethnicity and Identity in Ancient Israel: Prolegomena to the Study of Ethnic Sentiments and Their Expression in the Hebrew Bible* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1998), 39; see also Markus Zehnder, *Umgang mit Fremden in Israel und Assyrien: Ein Beitrag zur Anthropologie des “Fremden” im Licht antiker Quellen* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2005), 546, for similar sentiments.
- 118 Machinist sees a distinction between the “men and women” from “every part of my land” and the dignitaries from foreign countries mentioned in the “Banquet Stela of Aššurnāširpal II” and points out that vassal states are typically not included within the “people of Assyria” (Machinist, “Assyrians,” 91).
- 119 The idea of bringing people of different languages together under “one mouth” as Sargon II claims to do in his famous cylinder inscription and of training people (*ana šūhuz šibitte*) in “wisdom/knowledge” (*mūdūtu*) seems to be an indication that Assyrians wanted not just political hegemony, but cultural hegemony.
- 120 Following Machinist, who uses Rost’s translation (“Assyrians,” 89; Paul Rost, *Die Keilschrifttexte Tiglat-Pileasers III* [vol. 1; Leipzig, 1893], 26–7; 149–50). For a more recent translation, see Hayim Tadmor and Shigeo Yamada, *The Royal Inscriptions of Tiglath-Pileser III (744–727 BCE) and Shalmaneser V (726–722 BCE), Kings of Assyria* (RINA 1; Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2011), 46.
- 121 Machinist, “Assyrians,” 89.
- 122 Ibid., 85.
- 123 *mārē māt Aššur mūdūte ina kalāma ana šūhuz šibitte palāh ili u šarri akli šāpiri uma* ’’iršunūti from David G. Lyon, *Keilschrifttexte Sargons, Königs von Assyrien*

- (722–705 v. Chr) (Assyriologische Bibliothek 5; Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1883), 11–12, 38–9; 72–4, quoted in Machinist, “Assyrians,” 95.
- 124 A.G. Lie, *The Inscriptions of Sargon II, King of Assyria, Part I. The Annals* (Paris, 1929), quoted in Machinist, “Assyrians,” 85.
- 125 Horowitz’s translation (*Cosmic Geography*, 73).
- 126 Meghan Cifarelli, “Gesture and Alterity in the Art of Ashurnasirpal II of Assyria,” *The Art Bulletin* 80 (1998): 219 n. 54.
- 127 For the extensive processes and tools required to make and even drink beer, see Michael M. Homan, “Beer and Its Drinkers: An Ancient Near Eastern Love Story,” *Biblical Archaeologist* 67 (2004): 84–95.
- 128 Carlo Zaccagnini, “The Enemy in Neo-Assyrian Royal Inscriptions: The ‘Ethnographic’ Description,” in *Mesopotamien und seine Nachbarn: politische und kulturelle Wechselbeziehungen im alten Vorderasien vom 4. bis 1. Jahrtausend v. Chr. Vol. 1.* (ed. Johannes Renger; RAI 25; Berlin: D. Reimer, 1978), 412.
- 129 Zaccagnini, “The Enemy,” 412.
- 130 Ibid., 413.
- 131 Cifarelli, “Gesture and Alterity,” 210–28.
- 132 For this characterization and other similar characterizations of the enemy as “senseless,” see Rivaroli and Verderame, “Non-Assyrian,” 302. See also Frederick Mario Fales, “The Enemy in Assyrian Royal Inscriptions: The ‘Moral’ Judgment” in *Mesopotamien und Seine Nachbarn*, 428.
- 133 Fales, “Moral Judgment,” 428–9.
- 134 Ibid., 428–9; Rivaroli and Verderame, “Non-Assyrian,” 301–2.
- 135 Adah, *Scourge*, 85.
- 136 K 120b+ See Borger, *Beiträge*, 201–3, cited in *ibid.*, 85.
- 137 See Erie Leichty, *The Royal Inscriptions of Esarhaddon, King of Assyria (680–669 BC)* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2011), 111: 15–16, quoted in *ibid.*, 92.
- 138 A. Fuchs, “Die Inschrift vom Ištar-Tempel” in Rost, *Beiträge*, 138–62, cited in *ibid.*
- 139 For examples of the use of “son” see Jean-Jacques Glassner, “From Sumer to Babylon: Families as Landowners and Families as Rulers,” in *A History of the Family* (ed. André Burguière et al.; trans. Sarah Hanbury Tenison et al.; Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1996), 104.
- 140 Adah, *Scourge*, 58.
- 141 Translation from Erle Leichty, *The Omen Series Šumma Izbu* (TCS 4; Locust Valley, N.Y.: J.J. Augustin, 1968), III. 1–2, 24–7.
- 142 Ibid., 19.
- 143 Ibid., XII 11.
- 144 See Horowitz, “Babylonian Map,” 149, lines 8’–9’ and *Cosmic Geography*, 35. The Sumerian word **ugubi** (monkey) is rendered *pagû* (monkey) in many Old Babylonian Akkadian texts (“**ugubi**,” ePSD; CAD, P, 17, 19), the same word for “monkey” in the *Babylonian Map of the World*. Another Akkadian word that seems to be directly derived from the Sumerian is *uqûpu* (“ape”) (CAD, U/W, 204).
- 145 Hermann Hunger, *Spätbabylonische Texte aus Uruk* (vol. 1; ADFU 9; Berlin: Mann, 1976), 55, lines 72–4.

“HE FIXED THE BOUNDARIES OF THE EARTH”

Some biblical idioms of ethnicity

We now turn from Mesopotamia to the literature of ancient Israel. This chapter will look at some language used to describe foreigners in the Deuteronomistic tradition (Deuteronomy–2 Kings) and Holiness tradition (mainly Leviticus 17–26). These two traditions, and the “legal” material contained therein, set a tone for the treatment of foreigners that rippled throughout the centuries for those who would hold them to be sacred Scripture. The treatment of the Canaanites in the book of Deuteronomy is infamous, and the sexual stereotyping of Canaanites in Leviticus 18 and 20 is also well known. We will look at these caricatures in subsequent chapters, but first we need to assess the basic concepts of foreignness in these traditions.

Recall that in Chapter Two, I contend that foreignness can be described as the notion that someone is present in a geographic or environmental locale to which he or she does not “belong.” Who does and does not belong, and the degree of their perceived foreignness, depend on socially constructed ideas about what makes a person belong. Like ethnicity, there are a variety of, usually unpredictable, idiosyncratic factors that can contribute to the perception of foreignness and nativeness. In the modern world, with the developed nation state, formalized immigration and citizenship processes seem to have an impact on how people perceive foreignness. Other factors can exacerbate the perception of foreignness such as language or accent, customs and mannerisms. Ethnic foreignness is distinct, I argue, because references to common ancestry, in addition to references to alien territorial origins play a role in the conceptualization of the foreigner. Below, I argue that the Deuteronomistic and Holiness traditions, present markedly ethnic concepts of foreignness. The vocabulary and rhetoric that surround words for nation, people, foreigner, native, stranger and the like reveal that these two traditions held that ancestry and territorial origins were meaningful to the way that they categorized peoples.

This chapter, and subsequent chapters on the biblical material, revolve around ideas about foreigners contained in the Deuteronomistic and Holiness traditions. The goal is not to reconstruct a history of ancient Israel and Judah, but to discern the ideological views of foreigners that these texts

convey. Consequently, dating and provenance for the Deuteronomistic and Holiness traditions will not be central themes in this chapter, or in subsequent chapters. Nevertheless, dating and provenance may be relevant for understanding and contextualizing these ideas about foreigners. The possible dates and socio-political contexts for particular texts will be engaged if they are germane to understanding the passage or if dating will illuminate a particular issue.

Idioms of ethnicity in the Deuteronomistic tradition

I assume that the Deuteronomistic tradition consists of at least two main layers: one that developed between the early part of the reign of King Josiah (640–609 BCE) and the Babylonian Exile (587/6 BCE) and the other that developed during the time in which Judeans were exiled in Babylonia (for more information, see inset: “What is the Deuteronomistic Tradition?”). The most important contribution of the Deuteronomistic tradition is the idea that worship of Israel’s God should be centralized at the Temple in Jerusalem—an idea that had a life outside of the tradition itself, as in the book of Chronicles, Jeremiah and other prophets. Biblical scholars have found other unique emphases in the Deuteronomistic tradition, as well. I define the “Deuteronomistic” tradition as texts that clearly participate in Deuteronomistic rhetoric and ideology, generally thought by scholars to consist of Deuteronomy–2 Kings.

What is the Deuteronomistic tradition?

The history of interpreting Deuteronomistic texts starts in the nineteenth century, when biblical scholars began to notice ideas and emphases that were peculiar to these texts. Since then, the debates on Deuteronomistic texts have continued well into the twenty-first century.¹ In the 1940s, Martin Noth looked at the phrases, ideas and emphases found in Deuteronomy–2 Kings and concluded that these books constituted one historical oeuvre made up of compiled and sometimes conflicting traditions, written by one author called the “Deuteronomist” during the Judean exile, around 562 BCE, with a “simple and unified theological interpretation of history.”² Noth’s predecessors tended to see the “Deuteronomist” as an editor with a “secondary and inessential role in the construction of the work” and they often tried to find Deuteronomistic material in pre-Deuteronomistic sources such as the Epic Traditions (JE)—a quest with which Noth disagreed because, for him, there were no Deuteronomistic additions to other Pentateuchal traditions.³ With Noth’s thesis, the theory of the “Deuteronomistic History” (hereafter, DtrH) was born and the idea that there is such

a thing as a “Deuteronomistic History” within the Bible was, until recently,⁴ a cornerstone of biblical scholarship.

But ever since Noth proposed his idea, DtrH has taken on a life of its own as scholarship on DtrH has exploded in the sixty-plus years since Noth released *Überlieferungsgeschichte Studien* (English title: *The Deuteronomistic History*) in 1943. Many current theories of the DtrH’s composition differ immensely from Noth’s original proposal and a number of scholarly theories break apart DtrH, which Noth saw as a unity, into an assortment of editorial layers. These proposed editorial layers were supposedly added at different points in time and each had its own, distinct theological and ideological perspectives, which were then added to or woven into the “original” DtrH. Most scholars believe that there was an “original” DtrH, but have different names for this “original” incarnation of DtrH as well as different ideas about its date of composition, its viewpoint and its length.

In North America, the scholarly trend has been to call the “original” layer of DtrH, Dtr¹, following Frank Moore Cross’s seminal 1973 essay.⁵ Cross develops Gerhard von Rad’s and Hans Walter Wolff’s critique of Noth. Noth viewed DtrH as wholly pessimistic about the fate of Judah and the monarchy. Yet, that perspective does not seem to fit with certain passages, such as 2 Samuel 7, which is positive about the monarchy and foresees eternal kingship for David’s descendants.⁶ Those who follow Cross’s model, are said by some to follow a “block model,” meaning that their reconstructions of DtrH envision an “originally coherent whole” which was “supplemented, predominantly by adding larger units of material into and at the end of it...”⁷ The first big block of material, according to Cross’s theory, was written during the reign of King Josiah in the seventh century BCE (640–609 BCE), and legitimated his cultic reform program (see 2 Kings 23).⁸ This block was enthusiastic about the monarchy and included the unconditional promises of eternal kingship to David (2 Sam 7:13–16). The second block was composed during the exile, after the Babylonian conquest. In response to disaster, the Exilic DtrH block (=Cross’s Dtr²) reinterpreted the unconditional promises to David as conditional promises contingent on the king’s obedience to Yahweh (1 Kgs 9:6–9). The Exilic edition also included the hope of restoration should the people repent (Deut 4:25–31; 30:1–20; 1 Kgs 8:46–53).⁹

In contrast to Cross’s block model, the scholarly trend in Germany and continental Europe has been to follow the thinking of Rudolf Smend and his students, who argue that DtrH went through at least three editorial revisions (DtrG = *Geschichte*, “history,” DtrN = *nomos*, “law,” and DtrP = *prophetisch*, “prophetic”). Those who follow Smend’s ideas are frequently referred to as the “Göttingen School.” Smend argued that someone revised conquest pericopes in Joshua and Judges by adding

passages that emphasize obedience to the Mosaic Law (e.g., Josh 1:6–7; 13:1b–6; Judg 1:1–2:5, 7, 20–1, 23).¹⁰ Smend named the editor who overlaid DtrG with these verses, DtrN. Walter Dietrich, one of Smend’s students, noted that a number of prophetic pronouncements in 1 and 2 Kings have verses that specifically refer to their fulfillment (see, e.g., 1 Kgs 14:7–13 and 15:29; 2 Kgs 21:10–14 and 24:2).¹¹ Based on this observation, Dietrich contended that there was a later editor who composed passages showing that the prophecies came to pass. Dietrich referred to this editor as DtrP. The Göttingen School tends to date all three layers of Dtr to the exile, and Dietrich believes that DtrN was possibly the last layer, harmonizing DtrG and DtrP according to a generally pro-Davidic viewpoint. Timo Veijola, another protégé of Smend, attempted to use the model to explain the seemingly contradictory attitudes toward kingship in 1 and 2 Samuel.¹²

Considering the various ways in which scholars propose DtrH was composed, no one would be faulted for saying that the last thing biblical scholarship needs is another theory of DtrH’s composition. And so, there will be no new theory of DtrH presented here. However, I will make another suggestion about how to look at the compositional theories that have already been formed. For the most part, I will treat all Deuteronomistic texts as a unity and I will refer to them, collectively, as the “Deuteronomistic tradition.” To call the various books and traditions that comprise Deuteronomy and DtrH by one name, is to assert that all of the Deuteronomistic texts, irrespective of when their various layers were composed, have been subsumed under a common worldview and common themes that can be distinguished from other biblical traditions (e.g., Priestly, Holiness, JE, etc). A useful outline of the ideological viewpoint of Deuteronomism has been provided by Moshe Weinfeld:

1. The struggle against idolatry
2. The centralization of the cult
3. Exodus, covenant and election
4. The monotheistic creed
5. Observation of the law and loyalty to the covenant
6. Inheritance of the land
7. Retribution and material motivation
8. Fulfillment of prophecy
9. Election of the Davidic dynasty¹³

Some of the tenets proposed by Weinfeld could use some clarification and reworking. First, “idolatry” is a common, but problematic, term for biblical polemics against religious icons, religious personnel and religious practices that Deuteronomistic authors did not like. Deuteronomistic

texts display contempt for worship at “high places” (*bāmôt*), veneration of “lords” (*bē’ālīm*) which are possibly local manifestations of gods, including Yahweh,¹⁴ “asherahs,” some kind of wooden cult object that may represent a goddess, the *qādēš/qēdēšâ*, freelance ritual specialists of some kind, other unspecified religious practices, necromancy (Deut 18:9–12), worship of the “host of heaven” and worship of unnamed “other gods.” Second, whether or not any part of Deuteronomy or the Deuteronomistic History, even Deuteronomy 4, can be said to be truly “monotheistic” is debatable.¹⁵ Third, with “election” should also come the idea of “holiness” because Deuteronomy emphasizes that the people of Israel are holy (Deut 7:6; 14:2; 14:21; 28:9). The idea that the people of Israel are holy distinguishes Deuteronomistic texts from Priestly texts, which assert that only the priests are holy (compare Num 16:3–7). Overall, despite the minor changes I would make to Weinfeld’s list, it captures Deuteronomistic ideology very well.

By using one term for all of the traditions that make up the Deuteronomistic texts I do not mean to suggest that one author penned all of the Deuteronomistic texts.¹⁶ When I say, the “Deuteronomistic tradition,” I am referring to literature that explicitly participates in Deuteronomistic ideology, which most scholars agree is the case with Deuteronomy and Joshua–2 Kings.¹⁷ I share Rainer Albertz’s view that Deuteronomy and DtrH should be first and foremost understood as an ideological phenomenon or, in his words, as a “‘theological current of the time’ typical of the sixth century BCE.” Just as there may be debates and differences within any ideological Tendenz (Marxism, feminism, libertarianism, etc.), the Deuteronomistic tradition betrays several differences of perspective, particularly about the nature of the monarchy, the people’s relationship with the land, the emphasis on covenant and the emphasis on wisdom. Along similar lines, Raymond F. Person also contends that “the Deuteronomic school had a common ideology that was expressed in a common language, even though changes in ideology certainly occurred over time as traditions changed.”¹⁸ The different perspectives may stem from the differences in historical context (i.e., an exilic perspective versus a pre-exilic perspective), but irrespective of when the texts developed, they are united in their promotion of Deuteronomistic ideology. I would also argue that a negative view of certain “foreigners,” such as the Canaanites, is a common ideological viewpoint found in the Deuteronomistic tradition.

The Deuteronomistic tradition is most likely an extremely complex work and it certainly consists of a variety of different sources. As David M. Carr notes, “intertextuality” was a part of scribal culture in the ancient world and all texts were composed from “a tissue of memorized quotations of earlier works.”¹⁹ These compositions were not simply compilations, citations, or exegesis of past material but

were fully original compositions created from memorized “building blocks” of older material. Yet, it is often impossible to reconstruct many of the hands that went into this intricate literary tapestry. Often when scholars have been able to detect discrete layers in non-biblical texts, the observable layers are fairly large blocks of explanatory and thematic material. For example, the Standard Babylonian version of the *Epic of Gilgamesh* adds an entire prologue, the Babylonian flood story and a speech by Utnapishtim to the Old Babylonian version of the Epic.²⁰

The cuneiform examples suggest it may be best to focus on larger chunks of text rather than parsing the text into a multitude of redactional layers, each of which contributed snippets. There were, indubitably, a multitude of hands that produced one “block” of text, but the idea that all of these hands can be isolated into discrete, redactional layers each with their own discernable ideologies runs into problems.²¹ Also, the detection of multiple traditions is not necessarily incompatible with notion of *composition* by one author. The Standard Babylonian version of *Gilgamesh* lists one author Šin-lēqi-unninni, who compiled and arranged the text, even though *Gilgamesh* is clearly a composite text.²²

As strong as the double-redaction theory is, some important adjustments and critiques have been made. First, some scholars who have followed in Cross’s footsteps believe there was much more written during the exilic period than was originally proposed by Cross.²³ Second, some interpreters prefer to talk about major periods of literary production in lieu of proposing specific dates and times of composition. In his pivotal work assessing the various theories of the Deuteronomistic History both in Europe and North America,²⁴ Thomas Römer argues that “deuteronomistic literary production” began in the Neo-Assyrian period (seventh century BCE), but that the “Deuteronomistic History” was not written until the exile. Römer may or may not be correct about his historical reconstruction of DtrH’s composition, but one of his major contributions to biblical scholarship is his proposal that DtrH’s composition should be understood as stemming from periods of literary activity.

Both the current research on text production in the ancient world and Römer’s arguments have prompted me to prefer the words “developed,” “composed” and “compiled” to “written” when talking about the different layers of the Deuteronomistic tradition (and all biblical strata). The word, “written” might suggest that there was a fixed text, but it seems as though texts in antiquity were unstable, evolving and the product of many contributors. Following Römer’s lead, I assume that there were at least two, and possibly three, major periods of literary activity in which Deuteronomistic texts developed: The Neo-Assyrian Period (seventh century BCE), the Exilic Period (post 586/7), and,

possibly, the post-Exilic period or early Second Temple Period (fifth century BCE–fourth century BCE). These periods of literary activity are clearly reflected at different points in within the tradition. As one might expect, there are a variety of proposals for how the texts of these different periods were put together. One major debate about the Neo-Assyrian Period is whether the literary activity began during the reign of Hezekiah (715–687 BCE) or during the reign of Josiah.²⁵ Resolving these debates is well beyond the scope of this project.

As a solution to the problem of multiple ideas contained among Deuteronomistic texts, scholars have proposed that there was a Deuteronomistic “movement” that began in the northern kingdom, or a scribal “school” in ancient Judah. Unfortunately, these intriguing theories are difficult to prove at this point.²⁶ As ideologues, various Deuteronomistic authors would have an interest in co-opting, engaging and responding to a multiplicity of ideas in the history.²⁷ Some of the texts I analyze closely make up the exilic frame of Deuteronomy, such as Deuteronomy 4 and 28.²⁸ Other texts are ambiguous with respect to date and provenance, such as Deuteronomy 32. However, the work of both the pre-exilic, exilic and post-exilic contributors to the tradition reflect the ideology of “Deuteronomism,” and the stories incorporated into the tradition have been appropriated for the authors’ own purposes. When dealing with Deuteronomistic texts, I will be mindful of the possible dating of texts and will portray various texts as voices with different perspectives in dialogue with one another, but united in their promotion of Deuteronomistic ideology.

Being “foreign” and “strange” (nkr/zûr) in Deuteronomistic texts

There are two major Hebrew roots for foreignness employed within the Deuteronomistic tradition, *nkr* (“to be foreign”) and *zûr* (II, “to be strange”). Outside of Deuteronomistic texts, these roots have a range of meaning, and they do not necessarily refer to ethnicity. Most often, the roots seem to refer to an object or person outside of a designated category or grouping of objects/people. Similarly, L.A. Snijders claims that the root *zûr* denotes “that which does not belong,” a concept that does not differ too much from my own.²⁹ The designated category is often an ethnic group (see below), but the category can also encompass smaller descent-groups such as families or “clans” and object-groups such as “things that are holy.” For example, Priestly and Holiness texts use the root *zûr* to refer to those who are outside of the priestly genealogical line (Exod 29:33; 30:33; Lev 22:10–13; Num 1:51; 3:10, 38; 17:5 [ET 16:40]; 18:4, 7). Anyone who is not a member of a priestly family is labeled a “stranger” (*zâr*, a participial form of the root, *zûr*). Priestly texts are keen to distinguish between priests and strangers because only priests and

their immediate families may consume holy foods. The Priestly tradition also uses the root *zûr* to refer to illegitimate fire (*’ēš zārâ*) and incense (*qēṭoret zārâ*) used on the incense altar for Yahweh (Exod 30:9; Lev 10:1–2; Num 3:4; 26:61). In both the cases of the fire and incense as well as the laypeople, what are considered *zārîm* are objects and people outside of the category “things that are holy (*qdš*) to Yahweh,” but laypersons are also *zārîm* because they stand outside a holy descent-group (“Aaronids”).

In passages outside the Deuteronomistic tradition, especially in wisdom literature, the roots *nkr* and *zûr* sometimes simply mean “another” as in “someone distinct from the subject.”³⁰ So Prov 27:2 says, “Let another (*zār*) praise you, and not your own mouth, a stranger (*nokrî*) and not your own lips.” Helmer Ringgren suggests that Prov 5:10, 20 and Qoh 6:2 are other examples in which *nokrî* simply means “another.”³¹ But at least two of these examples may refer to members outside of the descent-group of the household (*bayit*). Prov 5:10 describes the fate of a man who falls for an adulterous woman: “strangers (*zārîm*) will be filled with your strength and your treasures will go to the house of another (*bêt nokrî*).” The use of *zārîm* in conjunction with *bêt nokrî* suggests that the “strangers” are members of another household (*bayit*), which means that the author is admonishing the young man not to go after an adulterous woman lest his pursuit result in people who are not among his household (non-heirs?) acquiring his property. The terminology based on *nkr* and *zûr* in Prov 5:10 would, of course, fit poetically with the same kind of terminology used for the “strange woman” ([*’iššâ*] *zārâl nokriyyâ*), who also comes from outside of the household (Prov 5:20). In Qoh 6:2, however, *nokrî* does seem to simply refer to another person who is explicitly contrasted with “the man (*’iš*) to whom God has given riches.”

Based on their use in parallelism (see Prov 5:10 above), the roots *nkr* and *zûr* appear to be closely related, and it is difficult to determine whether or not they are completely synonymous or whether there are some subtle differences between the two roots. In Psa 69:9 (ET 69:8), the Psalmist laments, “I have become estranged (*mûzâr*, participial form of *zûr*) from my brethren, a foreigner (*nokrî*) to my mother’s children.” In a similar vein, Job laments, “The residents of my house and my female slaves reckon me a stranger (*zâr*); I am a foreigner (*nokrî*) in their eyes” (Job 19:15). These appear to be extended uses of *nkr* and *zûr* that denote estrangement, alienation and unusualness (see also Isa 28:21) without any discernable shades of meaning between the two terms.

As many of the examples above demonstrate, the roots *nkr* and *zûr* often, though certainly not always, carry negative connotations,³² and their use in Deuteronomistic texts is no exception, as they repeatedly utilize *nkr* and *zûr* to cast people and gods in a negative light. In the Deuteronomistic tradition, *nkr* derived words are commonly employed to describe religious practices that this tradition characterizes as disloyal to Israel’s God. Deuteronomistic authors claim that illegitimate cults and ritual traditions are centered around “foreign gods” (*’ēlōhê nēkār*, Deut 31:16,³³ 32:12; Josh 24:20, 23; Judg 10:16;

1 Sam 7:3). In one instance, the root *zûr* is used to describe “foreign [gods]” (Deut 32:16).³⁴ In addition to gods, the Deuteronomistic tradition also applies terminology derived from the root *nkr* to negatively characterize people. The mention of Solomon’s “foreign wives” is a very notable example (1 Kgs 11:1, 8), both because Solomon’s “foreign wives” are said to have prompted him to set up cults to “foreign gods” and also because of the impact the story of Solomon’s “sin” against Yahweh had on later interpreters, such as the author of Neh 13:26.³⁵ Looking at these Deuteronomistic examples as well as examples from other biblical traditions, it seems safe to say that things associated with the roots *nkr* and *zûr* are frequently, but not always, presented as threats to social or community units and structures. The strange woman, repeatedly invoked in Proverbs, threatens the family structure. Strange gods, fire and incense threaten the community’s religious life. Finally, the consumption of holy offerings by strangers threatens the community’s religious life as well as the possessions, property and privileges of a social unit (the priests).

On the other hand, *nkr* can possess a neutral sense. For example, *nkr* is used to distinguish family or kin members from non-kin. In Deut 14:21, the “foreign” person is simply contrasted with an Israelite and resident alien (*gēr*). The Priestly account of Yahweh’s covenant with Abraham identifies the “foreigner” (*ben-nēkār*) as someone “who is not among your descendants” (*‘āšer lō’ mizzar ‘ākā hū’* —Gen 17:12). Gen 17:9–14 delineates who must be circumcised within an Israelite household, asserting that all the males of the household, including dependants (i.e., foreign slaves) should be circumcised. This use of *nkr* clearly denotes a descent-based foreignness because the foreigner is contrasted with Abraham’s descendants, literally, his “seed.”

Similarly, the root *zûr* seems to have a connection with descent at times. To use a Deuteronomistic example, in Deut 25:5, a law concerning Levirate marriage, a widow may not marry “outside [the family] to a stranger” (*hahûšā lē’iš zār*), but rather a surviving brother of the deceased must perform his Levirate duties and take her as a wife. The Deuteronomistic Levirate marriage laws contrast the “brothers” (*‘ahîm*), a familial term, with the “stranger” (*‘iš zār*). Moving to a non-Deuteronomistic source, the Priestly tradition also contrasts descendants and “strangers” in the narrative about Korah’s rebellion in Numbers 16–17. After Korah’s rebellion has been suppressed, Yahweh tells Moses that the “stranger,” (*‘iš zār*) may not offer incense to Yahweh, whereas “the descendants of Aaron” (*zera’ ‘ahārôn*) may (Num 17:5 [ET 16:40]). As is well known, the contrast between the “descendants of Aaron” and “strangers” in the Korah narrative is part of a Priestly concern with keeping the privileges of the sons (*bānîm*) or descendants (*zera’*) of Aaron away from non-Aaronids (*zārîm*) (Exod 29:33; 30:33; Num 1:51; 3:10, 38; 18:1, 4, 7; Lev 22:10–13).

Some of the preceding uses of the roots *nkr* and *zûr* refer to those outside of a smaller descent group, be it a family-unit or a “clan” (e.g., descendants of Aaron). I would argue that the Deuteronomistic contrast between the

“stranger” and “brothers” with respect to the family in Deut 25:5 serves as the basis for the contrast between “strangers” and “brothers” with respect to the larger putative kin-group of the people of Israel in Deut 14:21; 15:2; 17:15; and 23:21 (here “stranger” is designated by the word *nokrî*). In other words, the familial language opposing “brother” and “foreigner,” which signifies the distinction between Israelites and non-Israelites, is rooted in the familial language of Deut 25:5, which distinguishes between people inside and outside the family. In all but one of these verses (Deut 14:21³⁶), the text contrasts the “foreigner” with the “brethren” of Israel. So, Deut 15:2 and 23:21 say that an Israelite may press a claim on a “foreigner,” after the seventh year, but not on his “brothers.” Note that Deut 15:2 also equates the “neighbor” (*rēaʿ*) with the “brethren” of Israel. Deut 17:15 commands the Israelites to only elect a king from among their “brethren” and not a “foreigner” (*nokrî*). These Deuteronomistic texts seem to share the viewpoint of Gen 17:9–14, which employs the root *nkr* to refer to people outside a smaller descent group and those outside a large (ethnic) descent group, simultaneously. Gen 17:9–14 juxtaposes Abraham’s descendants in his immediate household with outsiders, but the text is obviously also a representation of Israelites and non-Israelites.³⁷

In addition, because the root *nkr* usually refers to descent-groups in the Deuteronomistic tradition, when Deuteronomistic texts use the expression “foreign gods” (*ʿelōhē nēkār*), they are probably saying that these deities belong to foreign peoples and not the “brotherhood” of Israel. When Deuteronomistic texts refer to “foreign gods,” *nkr* does not convey the “another” or “someone distinct from the subject” definition of *nkr* noted above. The problem is not that these are gods “other than” Yahweh. Rather, the Deuteronomistic tradition associates these “foreign” gods with peoples who stand outside of the lineage group, “Israel.”

Words derived from the roots *nkr* and *zûr* can also have a spatial element, depending on the context. Returning to Deut 25:5, note that the word “outside” (*hûš*) is used in conjunction with the “stranger” (*ʾîš zār*). Normally, “outside” (*hûš*) signifies ordinary spatial relationships, or the word could refer to streets (in contrast to an enclosed space such as a home or courtyard). In another example, probably a story appropriated by the Deuteronomistic tradition, one of the women in Solomon’s famous adjudication of a dispute over a dead child says that there was “no ‘stranger’ (*zār*) with us in the house” (1 Kgs 3:18). Judging from the uses of the word “house” (*bayit*) in this pericope, it seems that the concept of “strangeness” here means someone from outside the physical space in which the women live, though “house” can mean “household” as well. Here the “stranger” is contrasted with the women who “live together in one house,” “gave birth together in the house,” and “were together in the house” (*ʾānahñû yaḥdāw...babbāyit*³⁸). The “stranger,” for these women, would be a person who comes from outside of the physical space of the house. However, the definition of *zār* as “another,” expressing

general alterity, also works here. It could be that the stranger is just someone who is *not* the two women.

It is unsurprising that spatial language (e.g., *hûš*) would be used in conjunction with words for “foreign” or “stranger” in the Hebrew Bible. Spatial proximity and entitativity seem to be correlated, and the uses of the roots *zûr* and *nkr* seem to reflect the intuitive links between space and group perception, noted in Chapter Two.³⁹ That these roots can at times denote “another” in contrast to the “subject” may also be relevant to the tendency in humanistic scholarship to see a connection between “self/other” and “native/foreign.” Perhaps the humanistic tendency to claim that separating “I” from “you” is related to separating “us” from “them,” can be traced, in part, to linguistic occurrences such as these—when the same words (e.g., *zûr* and *nkr*) can in some contexts convey a distinction between native and foreign and in other contexts convey a distinction between “self” and “another.” Yet the Deuteronomistic tradition seems to typically use these particular roots to categorize people into descent-groups and specifically to distinguish those who belong to the “brotherhood” of Israel from those who are “foreign.”

“People” and “nation”

Two other words used in the Deuteronomistic tradition, “people” (*‘am*) and “nation” (*gôy*), also seem to suggest that spatial elements are wrapped up in the language that expresses group perception. There are over five hundred appearances of the word “people” and over eighty of the word “nation” in Deuteronomistic texts. Rather than examine every single use of the word, let us observe some key uses in the Deuteronomistic tradition that may serve as representations for how the tradition as a whole views foreignness. Deuteronomy 32:8, part of the “Song of Moses,” states forcefully how the Deuteronomistic tradition sees “nations” and “peoples:”

When the Most High bequeathed the nations,⁴⁰ when he separated humanity, he fixed the borders of peoples according to the number of divine beings.⁴¹ For Yahweh’s portion is his people; Jacob is the territory of his inheritance (Deut 32:8–9).

I submit that the Song of Moses offers a definition of “nation” in verse 8. In this passage, “nations” seem to be peoples (*‘ammîm*) who have been divided into their respective borders (*gēbūlôt*), fixed (*nšb*, Hiphil) according to the number of divine beings. In Deut 32:8, the “fixing” of boundaries takes place within mythical time, in a past when the Most High (elsewhere, but not here explicitly, identified with Yahweh⁴²) gave different deities their own inheritances based on divinely ordained borders.

The tradition of a cosmic fixing of boundaries presented in Deut 32:8 appears to be shared by Psa 74:17 and Isa 51:14–16. After mentioning some

of Yahweh’s other acts of creation, such as the creation of the sun and heavenly bodies, as well as his mythological acts, such as the slaying of the sea dragon, Psa 74:17 says that Yahweh “fixed the boundaries of the earth” (*hiṣṣabtā kol-gēbūlôt ’āreš*). The mythological references that surround the fixing (again, *nṣb*, Hiphil) of earthly boundaries (*gēbūlôt*) in Psa 74:17 shows that Deut 32:8 takes place in a mythic past.⁴³ In Isaiah 51, which also contains a great deal of mythological imagery (e.g., verses 9–11), Yahweh promises to free the exiles because he “stirs up the sea and its waves roar” and he further claims, “I covered you with the shadow of my hand to establish the heavens, to found the earth and to say to Zion, ‘You are my people!’” (51:15–16). The mythologizing of earthly boundaries in Deut 32:8 can also be compared to Ugaritic texts in which gods are given land as an inheritance.⁴⁴

In addition, if looked at in the context of other ideas contained in Deuteronomistic material, these “fixed” boundaries appear to be fairly permanent. According to the legal material in the Deuteronomistic tradition, “boundaries” (*gēbūlîm/gēbūlôt*) given in inheritance should not be moved (Deut 19:14; 27:17; for non-Deuteronomistic texts, see also Hos 5:10; Job 24:2; Prov 15:25; 22:28; 23:10). Indeed, the very use of the root *nḥl* (Qal: “to inherit” or Hiphil: “to bequeath”) implies a permanent fixedness for these boundaries. Property that is inherited (*nḥl*) seems to be perpetually established because inherited property is often accompanied by the expression “forever” (*lē’ ôlām*) (Exod 32:13; Lev 25:46; Psa 37:18; 119:111; 1 Chr 28:8).⁴⁵ Exod 32:13 is probably the best example of the “inheritance” being promised forever, since the land given to Abraham’s, Isaac’s and Jacob’s descendants (*zera’*) will be inherited forever (*nāḥlû lē’ ôlām*; see also 1 Chr 28:8). The traditions in biblical literature that mandate the permanent establishment of boundaries can, perhaps, be compared to Mesopotamian traditions that sacralized the boundary markers between different territories and even placed boundary markers within temples to, apparently, sacralize these boundaries.⁴⁶ At the same time, other texts suggest Yahweh can rearrange and destroy national boundaries if he so chooses (e.g., Isa 10:13).

I have just argued that Deut 32:8 defines “nations” (*gōy*) as spatially bounded peoples (*‘ammîm*) bequeathed to particular gods, and yet the difference between the words “nation” and “people” is difficult to delineate. The difficulty is exacerbated by the fact that in numerous instances, “people” and “nation” seem to be almost interchangeable. In Deut 32:8, it could be argued that there is a difference between “people” and “nation” because in this passage “nations” seem to be composed of “peoples” divided by their respective boundaries. But Deut 4:5–6 poses a different problem:

Look, I have taught you statutes and rulings according to what Yahweh my God commanded me so that you act accordingly in the midst of the land you are entering to possess. So keep and do them for that is your wisdom and your understanding in the eyes of the

peoples who hear all these statutes. And they will say, “Surely this great nation is a wise and discerning people.”

In Deut 4:5–6, probably a text from the exilic period,⁴⁷ it seems as though “nation” and “people” are used almost interchangeably.⁴⁸ But what does this interchangeability mean? Does the interchangeability mean that “nation” and “people” are virtually synonymous, or is there a subtle difference between the two terms? Some commentators certainly think there is a difference between “nation” and “people.” Ephraim A. Speiser argues that that “people tends to emphasize common cultural and social characteristics, while nation is mainly a political designation associated as a rule with state and government.”⁴⁹ Speiser further contends that:

...a *gōy* can be made, established, founded, or the like...They can, however, go out of existence (Jer 31:35). As opposed to all this, an *‘ām* just is; it is a physical fact...an *‘ām* can eat and drink, be faint and suffer thirst, quarrel and complain and weep, tremble or flee or hide in caves, come into the world and eventually be buried. It is a group of persons. The *gōy* on the other hand, even when not tied to the land or linked to a state is a regimented body, e.g., when it crosses a stream or makes war. The one, in sum, is discrete, the other collective.⁵⁰

Speiser compares the terms associated with “nation” to the terms associated with “people” to make his argument. “Nations” are classified according “geographic and linguistic principles” (*bē’aršōtām/lilšōnōtām*) in Genesis 10, and are composed of “families” (*mišpāḥōt*), which, Speiser asserts, are administrative units. Additionally, “nations” are comprised of “humans” (*‘ādām*), but “peoples” are composed of “individuals” (*‘iš*), where the former, “human,” is, according to Speiser, a “statistic.”

There may be some differences between the uses of “nation” and “people,” as Speiser suggests, yet there may still exist an inextricable fluidity between the two terms that makes a clear demarcation very difficult.⁵¹ It should be acknowledged that a “people” can be destroyed and established as well.⁵² “Peoples” are made and dissolved, apparently, at the will of the deity, just as much as “nations” are. Along the lines of positing a more political definition for “nation,” some have argued that “race, government and territory” are all important components of a “nation.”⁵³ Of course, as noted, the word “race” is problematic when discussing ancient societies, but what is usually meant by race is something along the lines of “consanguinity” or a genealogical relationship. I would certainly agree that these aspects are critical for the definition of a nation, but whether or not these aspects can be used to distinguish “nation” from “people” remains unclear.

Looking at Deut 32:8–9 again, it appears as though “people” are associated with land in a way that makes a distinction between “nation” and “people” in terms of their political connotations and relationship to land more complicated. The statement, “Yahweh’s portion is his people; Jacob, the region of his inheritance” with its juxtaposition of “people” and “region,” suggests nation, people and land are intricately connected in Deuteronomistic ideology. It could be cogently argued that the use of “region” (*hebel*⁵⁴), which usually refers to physical tracts of land (Josh 17:14; 19:9; Psa 16:6; esp. Zeph 2:5–6), is metaphorical when referring to Yahweh’s “people,” but it is also possible that the use of physical boundary markers suggests that Deut 32:9 wants to re-emphasize that land is inherent in Deuteronomistic notions of Yahweh’s “people.” The word “region” (*hebel*) is used in juxtaposition with the word “inheritance” (*naḥālā*) elsewhere in the Deuteronomistic tradition (Josh 17:17; 19:9), but perhaps the “region” in Deut 32:9 is closest to Zephaniah’s idea of “region”:

Woe to the inhabitants of the sea region (*hebel hayyām*), the nation (*gōy*) of the Cherethites. The word of Yahweh is against you, O Canaan, land of the Philistines. And I will destroy you so that there is no inhabitant. And the sea region (*hebel hayyām*) will be pastures, caves for shepherds, and pens for flocks.

In Zeph 2:5–6, the “sea region” is a place inhabited by a nation, the Cherethites (i.e., the Philistines). Zephaniah 2:5–6 certainly seem to support the argument that “land” is inseparable from the idea of “nation.” Zephaniah also seems to support Speiser’s assertion that “nations” can be destroyed.

The identification of the nation of the Cherethites with “inhabitants” (*yōšēbīm*) of the sea region in Zech 2:5–6 raises the question of whether the term “inhabitant” (*yōšēb*), a participial form of the verb “to dwell,” is another term that demarcates “nations” or “peoples.” Judging from the way other texts utilize the term “inhabitant” and a geographic name it is very possible that it is. The ubiquitous use of the expression “inhabitants of the land” (*yōšbē hā’āreṣ*) to designate the Canaanites is the best example of this use of “inhabitant,” and a number of sources throughout the biblical corpus use this particular expression to refer to Canaanites (Gen 34:30; 50:11; Exod 23:31; 34:12, 15; Num 32:12, 52; 33:55; for Deuteronomistic examples, see below). Granted, “inhabitant” + geographic name is also used to simply denote people who live in a particular geographic area and it is not always a term that demarcates nations.⁵⁵ But “inhabitant” + geographic name seems to be among the expressions used, at times, to describe nations and peoples. At any rate, the use of “region” to describe the territory of a “nation” and the juxtaposition of “people” and “region” in Deut 32:8, supports the idea of an interrelationship between “nation,” “people” and land.

Deuteronomy 32 and Genesis 10

How should Deut 32:8 be understood in relation to other ideas about peoples, nations and land in the biblical corpus? It seems safe to say that usually in the Deuteronomistic tradition, “people” and “nation” are used interchangeably and that peoples and nations are attached to lands. It could be that “nation” refers to a politically organized “people,” but it also seems as though nation cannot exist without a people and vice-versa. Like many chapters surrounding the generally undisputed core of Deuteronomy, Deuteronomy 32, the Song of Moses, is difficult to date. Most agree that the Song has its roots in the pre-exilic period,⁵⁶ but some assert that the song was inserted in the book of Deuteronomy to respond to the crisis of exile.⁵⁷ Whenever it developed, Deuteronomy 32 seems to share some similarities with Genesis 10, the famous Table of the Nations. The similarity between the two texts might point to an influential concept of national origins in Israelite and Judean discourse.

With Genesis 10, Deuteronomy 32 shares the idea that the nations are divided (*prd*) geographically, but the two passages emphasize different ways by which the nations are divided. Deut 32:8 claims that Yahweh divided (Hiphil, *prd*) peoples by “boundaries.” Genesis 10 says that the “coastlands of the nations were divided (Niphal, *prd*) according to their lands, individually according to their languages, and families, into their nations” (Gen 10:5). Both passages use geographic terms to describe their respective divisions: “boundaries” (*gēbūlôt*) for the Deuteronomistic tradition, “lands” (*ʾārāṣôt*) in the Yahwist-Priestly composition of Genesis 10.⁵⁸ In addition, Deut 32:8–9 credits Yahweh with the division of humanity, but Genesis 10 simply says that the nations “were divided.” Genesis 10 emphasizes language and clan structure in their division, whereas Deut 32:8–9 emphasizes patron gods. Lastly, Genesis 10 does not mention the word “people” (*am*) but Deut 32:9 does.

Despite these differences, Deut 32:8–9 and Gen 10:5 share the idea that nations and peoples (if these terms are interchangeable) are divided geographically, are tied to ancestors, and that this division lies in the distant, mythic past of humanity. In Genesis 10, this distant past is the post-diluvian period and the repopulation of the earth. Deut 32:8–9 credits the division to Yahweh in cosmic time. In addition, Genesis 10 stresses that nations originate with common ancestors, as does Deut 32:8–9, which suggests that Jacob is Israel’s ancestor. The variations in emphasis, language and circumstance both appear to communicate the same idea: that the nucleus of a nation and a people is rooted in its ancestors and that nations and peoples have been divided into discrete territories. This cosmic division of peoples into territories seems to be the backdrop for the promises Yahweh makes to Israel about their possession of the land in the Deuteronomistic tradition. Throughout the tradition, Yahweh says that he has sworn to give the land to Israel’s ancestors and their “descendants” (literally, “seed,” *zeraʿ*, Deut 1:8; 11:9; 34:4). Deut 10:15 connects the word “seed” with the term “people” (*am*), suggesting

that common descent is inherent in the word, “people”: “Yahweh desired to love *only* your ancestors. And he chose you, their descendants (*zera'*), after them out of all the peoples (*mikkol hā'ammîm*).” In fact, the passage seems to use *zera'* as a synonym for *'am*, almost as if it is defining a “people” as consisting of “descendants.” By connecting descent, territory and peoplehood though the land promises of Yahweh, it certainly seems as though the Deuteronomistic tradition is constructing ethnic groups.

Idioms of ethnicity in the holiness tradition

Now let us turn to Leviticus 17–26, a legal collection known as the “Holiness Code.”⁵⁹ Though the book of Leviticus appears before Deuteronomy in the canonical arrangement of the Hebrew Bible, Leviticus 17–26 and indeed the entire book of Leviticus probably postdates much of Deuteronomy—except, of course, for late additions to Deuteronomy. There does seem to be a general consensus among biblical scholars that Leviticus 17–26 constitutes its own independent source, which can be distinguished both from the first sixteen chapters of the book of Leviticus and the larger Priestly work in which it is embedded (i.e., Genesis–Numbers). According to recent scholarship, the Holiness Code is the main composition and center of a larger editorial work that permeates the Pentateuch, which I will refer to as the Holiness tradition. Other scholars give this tradition other names, such as “Holiness School” and “H.” In keeping with my own perspective on sources in the Pentateuch, as I did for the Deuteronomistic tradition, I define the Holiness tradition as a collection of texts that share the same outlook, ideology and idioms. As we will see, like the Deuteronomistic tradition, one of the ways to distinguish the Holiness tradition from other traditions is the way that it conceptualizes foreigners.

What is the holiness tradition?

The idea that the Holiness Code (Leviticus 17–26) should be considered a discrete source was developed in the nineteenth century, and some of the more noteworthy early promoters of the theory include Karl Heinrich Graf, Abraham Kuenen and Julius Wellhausen. Graf separated Leviticus 1–17 from 18–26 and noted the similarities between the language and themes of Leviticus 18–26 and the rhetoric of the book of Ezekiel.⁶⁰ Kuenen took up Graf’s observation and argued that Leviticus 18–26 was the earliest of three stages in the development of the Priestly source⁶¹ (hereafter P), which was followed by the addition of a historical narrative with some limited legal material, and a final stage, a more extensive legal supplement, mainly outlining rituals.⁶² Finally, Wellhausen argued that Leviticus 17 should be included in the division

of Leviticus 18–26 as a separate source. Notably, he also believed that while the Holiness Code was penned earlier than the rest of the P corpus, it was only *incorporated* into the corpus at the latest stage of P’s composition, during the early post-Exilic era (fifth century BCE).⁶³

Thanks to the work of these early critics, the theory that Leviticus 17–26 constitutes an independent source achieved the rare privilege of becoming a “consensus” within biblical scholarship. Even today, though there are profound disagreements about the date of the Holiness Code and its relationship to P and the rest of the Pentateuch, most critics tend to agree that Leviticus 17–26 is an independent composition with its own unique vocabulary and themes.⁶⁴ Graf, Kuenen and Wellhausen also agreed that the Holiness Code was a composition that pre-dated the Priestly tradition; these earlier critics disagreed about *when* P appropriated the Holiness Code. For example, Kuenen believed that the Holiness Code was the earliest stage in the composition of the Priestly Source,⁶⁵ while Wellhausen believed that the Holiness Code was incorporated into P’s work in the final stages of its production. The idea that the Holiness Code was an *earlier*, independent composition also enjoyed widespread agreement until Karl Elliger suggested that the Holiness Code was created as a supplement to the narrative material of P (otherwise known as Pg⁶⁶).⁶⁷ In other words, for Elliger, the Holiness Code was not an earlier composition that was *incorporated* into P at a stage of its development, nor was the Holiness Code the earliest strand of the Priestly tradition; rather, the Holiness Code was actually *produced* in the middle stages of P’s formation. Elliger’s argument prompted a shift in how some critics began to view the Holiness Code.⁶⁸ Many scholars began to see the Holiness Code as a text that was deeply woven into the fabric of P in a way that seemed to militate against the idea that the Holiness Code was written earlier than the P corpus.

After Elliger, scholars began to look even more closely at ways in which the Holiness Code presupposes P’s stories, ideas and themes in its legal pronouncements and scenarios. From this starting point—the assumption that the Holiness Code is unique in style and emphasis but nevertheless betrays a familiarity with P—biblical scholars really part ways. And the different theories about the role of the Holiness Code in the development of P vary widely. The dominant, though controversial, viewpoint seems to be that the author(s) of the Holiness Code played some kind of editorial role, either in the composition of P or in the composition of the Pentateuch as a whole. Israel Knohl’s proposition that the “Holiness School” (his term for the authors of the Holiness Code) were responsible for *editing* P (and indeed, for him, the entire Pentateuch⁶⁹) in its final form remains one of the more prominent theories explaining the Holiness Code’s relationship to the rest of P. According to Knohl’s theory—adopted by Jacob Milgrom with his

own modifications⁷⁰—the Holiness Code is the centerpiece and main composition of the “Holiness School,” the priestly circle that, Knohl claims, compiled the entire Pentateuch. In my view, the cogency of this theory can be credited to two factors. First, the theory that the so-called “Holiness School” played an editorial role explains the presence of language and themes that are unique to Leviticus 17–26 in places outside of the Holiness Code (e.g., Exod 12:43–9; Lev 11:43–5). Among the language and themes that seem unique to the author(s) of the Holiness Code, two stand out:

1. Israel’s God refers to himself in the first person (e.g., “I am Yahweh your God”—Lev 18:2, 4, 30; 19:3–4, *et passim*).⁷¹
2. Whereas in the P corpus, the concept of holiness was generally restricted to the realm of the temple and cult, the Holiness Code has expanded the idea of holiness so that it includes the entire people of Israel. As Lev 19:2 famously says, “You shall be holy, for I, Yahweh your God, am holy” (compare Num 16:3–5 [P]). In fact, the Holiness Code fuses the concept of holiness with morality, making proper social and religious behavior an expression of holiness (Leviticus 18–20).⁷²

Second, Knohl’s theory explains why the Holiness Code seems to engage and respond to both Deuteronomistic and Priestly laws, particularly laws concerning festivals and the Sabbath.⁷³ Unlike Knohl, I avoid the word “school.”⁷⁴ Rather, I refer to the body of texts composed by the authors of the Holiness Code, as the “Holiness tradition” because I understand a biblical “tradition” to be a discrete, isolatable set of texts that share the same general ideological outlook and vocabulary. Biblical sources are a patchwork of earlier materials, recast and interpreted within a narrative framework with a particular ideological outlook. As Joel S. Baden notes, “it is the manner in which [disparate earlier independent elements and], the way in which these elements were shaped and contextualized in order to fit into the newly-created narrative framework that defines the source.”⁷⁵

For the purposes of my investigation, I treat the Holiness tradition as a single, unified tradition, which means that I will only deal with layers within the Holiness source when the assimilation of these sources *directly impacts* the way the Holiness tradition portrays ethnic foreigners. For example, there is some evidence that the author of Leviticus 18 incorporated a popular earlier list of incest taboos (18:6–18), which were combined with the laws of 18:19–23, to produce one of the Holiness tradition’s famous list of forbidden sexual practices (the other can be found in Leviticus 20).⁷⁶ While this part of the compositional history of Leviticus 18 is interesting, that Lev 18:6–18 may have been composed

earlier does not significantly alter the overall portrait of ethnic foreigners in Leviticus 18. Whether Lev 18:6–18 constitutes an earlier taboo list or not, the main point of Leviticus 18 is that the previous inhabitants of the land routinely practiced these incestuous and “illicit” sexual behaviors when they lived there. It is the final arrangement of the chapter that makes that overall point, and so the final arrangement of the text of Leviticus 17–26 will receive the bulk of my attention.

The date of the holiness tradition

Coming to the conclusion that the Holiness tradition redacted and supplemented the Priestly tradition only answers an editorial question; it does not resolve the arguably even more contentious debate over the dating of Holiness texts. Those who might agree that a Holiness redactor edited the Priestly tradition disagree intensely over the dates to assign to these strata. On one side, Knohl and Milgrom argue that the bulk of Holiness texts should be dated to the eighth century BCE,⁷⁷ while others, building on the conclusions of early German scholarship, argue that Holiness texts were written in the post-exilic period. Proponents of both sides have marshaled a number of arguments, but I will focus on two major points of contention: 1. Does the Holiness tradition assume centralized worship, and if so, what does the assumption of centralized worship mean? 2. What does the covenant with Abraham in Genesis 17 (mostly Priestly) say about the dating of Holiness texts? My assumption will be that the Holiness tradition is an exilic, rather than a post-exilic or pre-exilic tradent.

1. Centralized worship. A number of critics argue that the prohibition on burnt offerings in any place besides the Tent of Meeting (Lev 17:8–9), presumes the Deuteronomistic ideology requiring that every domesticated animal sacrifice take place at the Temple in Jerusalem.⁷⁸ By contrast, Milgrom argues that the reference to “sanctuaries” (plural, *miqdāšîm*) in Lev 26:31 constitutes evidence for a pre-exilic date because, according to him, it presumes the existence of multiple shrines. In Milgrom’s favor, the “sanctuaries” mentioned in Lev 26:31 do seem to be legitimate sanctuaries in H’s eyes because they are paired with a reference to Yahweh smelling the soothing aroma of sacrifices. He further contends that, unlike Deuteronomistic texts and other sources (Amos 7:9) that recognize that high places are locales for Yahweh worship, Holiness sources identify “high places” (*bāmôt*) solely with “idolatry.”⁷⁹ Whereas the word “sanctuaries” refers to legitimate multiple sanctuaries for Yahweh, “high places” are locales for “idolatrous” worship. Milgrom’s argument is plausible, but is not the only possible reading. I would contend that the “sanctuaries” mentioned in Lev 26:31 could

refer to the inner and outer sanctuaries of the Temple complex (cf. 1 Kgs 6:29–30). This is reinforced by Lev 21:23, which says that a priest may not go in to the veil (inner sanctuary) or come near the altar (outer sanctuary) and thus “profane [Yahweh’s] *sanctuaries*.” Consequently, there is no clear evidence that any Holiness text shows that sanctuaries other than the central sanctuary (metaphorically represented by the Tent of Meeting in Leviticus 17) are legitimate.

Knohl, on the other hand, recognizes that Holiness texts promote the centralization of sacrifice at one main sanctuary, but argues that the pro-centralization theme points to a pre-exilic date because it shows that Holiness texts have affinities with Deuteronomistic ideology and in particular, the religious reforms of Hezekiah.⁸⁰ But Holiness texts, unlike Deuteronomistic texts, do not stigmatize the religious practices it considers illicit as foreign. Rather, Holiness texts focus almost entirely on the community and deviant internal behavior that may undermine the community. While the differences between the Holiness and Deuteronomistic traditions do not necessarily help pinpoint a precise date for Holiness texts, the divergent focuses do suggest that Holiness texts may not be contemporaneous with Deuteronomistic texts. Additionally, the internal focus on the community supports a reorientation to family and clan praxis that characterizes the Priestly and Holiness perspectives (see below).

2. *Circumcision*. If a Holiness redactor edited Priestly texts, evidence suggesting that Priestly texts were most likely composed during the exile also points to an exilic date for Holiness texts. Genesis 17:10–14 makes circumcision a sign of the covenant, a perspective that makes the most sense in the context of exile. In other biblical texts, the absence of circumcision is considered a shameful practice, which is used to stigmatize *certain* foreigners such as Philistines (1 Sam 17:26; 18:25–7) or Hivvites (Gen 34:15–31), but in the Priestly tradition, circumcision has been recast as a symbol of Abraham’s covenant with Yahweh. Since there is evidence that West Semitic peoples did circumcise,⁸¹ and East Semitic peoples (i.e., Babylonians and Assyrians) did not, the prestige given to circumcision as a sign of a unique covenant fits in a context in which this Israelite social practice would be very distinct.⁸² Furthermore, Genesis 17 makes circumcision a sign of an “eternal covenant” (*bērit ‘ôlām*), an idea that was apparently developed and promoted in the exile by the Priestly tradition and then appropriated by the Holiness tradition (see Lev 26:44–5).⁸³

The centrality of the patriarchal household and the clan also points to a post-monarchic date. It is possible that the Holiness outlook reflects an earlier agrarian perspective that differs from the urban, monarchic perspective found in Deuteronomistic sources. It strikes me as more

likely that making the family a focal point reflects the general exilic tendency, also found in P, to bring the focus of Israelite life back to the paterfamilias and family praxis (see the emphasis on sexual practices that affect the patriarchal household in Leviticus 18 and 20; the importance of observing sacred times in Leviticus 23;⁸⁴ and the emphasis on patrimonial estates in Leviticus 25). Thus, the Holiness tradition's re-emphasis of dietary laws (Lev 20:24–6) and its focus on Sabbaths also reflects an exilic context. While Jan Joosten points to “people of the land” as a possible reference to a monarchic institution,⁸⁵ the monarchy itself, as well as its judicial system of judges and magistrates, are nowhere to be found in Holiness texts (compare Deut 17:9–20; 19:18–19). The idea of “elders of the city” (Deut 19:12; 21:19) as well as descriptions of urban organization are also absent in Holiness texts, though cities are mentioned (Lev 25:29–34).

The laws proposed by the Holiness tradition, and the society envisioned are “idealized,” in the same imaginative way as Ezekiel 40–8, parts of which most likely date from the sixth century BCE.⁸⁶ Leviticus 25 is particularly idealistic, complete with a scenario in which Yahweh brings bounty on the land if the Israelites follow counterintuitive (by the text's own admission) Sabbath laws (25:20–2). The idea that Israelites will maintain their patrimonial estates in perpetuity is reminiscent of the idealized divisions of the land in Ezekiel 47:13–48:35.⁸⁷ Instead of using a divine messenger to authorize this vision, as Ezekiel does, the Holiness tradition employs the national narrative of the Exodus and Mosaic tradition to authorize its prescriptions for an “ideal” society. The Holiness tradition's envisioned society is not utopian, for it imagines that its society might have what it considers deviants or disobedient people and seems more “down to earth” than the vision in Ezekiel 40–8.

The dating of Ezekiel 1–39 carries a great deal of weight in dating Holiness sources because the text, at times, seems familiar with some concepts and even terminology expressed in Holiness texts. If Ezekiel referred to Holiness texts in his own prophetic rhetoric, then Ezekiel's use of Holiness texts would be strong evidence that the Holiness tradition was compiled before the exile. The traditional view was that the Holiness tradition quoted from the book of Ezekiel, or was familiar with the Ezekiel tradition (e.g., Wellhausen, Kuenen).⁸⁸ Over the years, this view has been challenged and the debate over which came first—the Holiness tradition or Ezekiel—has not been resolved.⁸⁹ My own working assumption will be that Ezekiel and the Holiness tradition shared a common ideological heritage that persisted among the priesthood of ancient Israel during the Exile. Yet there are significant differences in outlook between the Holiness tradition and Ezekiel even as there are broad similarities. As I will argue in this chapter, the Holiness tradition distances Israelites from the defiling “abominations”

listed in Leviticus 18 and 20, whereas Ezekiel accuses Israelites of committing some of the “abominations” mentioned in those very chapters (e.g., Ezek 22:10). But the differences between the two authors raise another question: Were either one of the authors responding to the other? Was the Holiness tradition responding to Ezekiel, or vice versa? Unfortunately, I will not be able to engage this intriguing question. In addition, because the scribal culture of the ancient Near East was largely oral, I believe that it is impossible to conclude that one of the authors had the other’s text in front of him. Rather, both texts employ moral and religious ideas circulating in the priesthood, which they adopted for their own purposes.

*The “resident alien” (gēr), the “foreigner” (ben-nēkār)
and the “native” (‘ezrāḥ)*

Interestingly, the root *nkr* does not appear very frequently in the Holiness tradition, though it does appear prominently in a Holiness text outside of the Holiness Code (Exod 12:43–9) and once within the Holiness Code itself (Lev 22:25). The key terminology that relates to Holiness constructions of foreigners, foreignness and “belongingness” include: “resident alien” (*gēr*), and its verbal counterpart *gūr*, “to reside as a resident alien”), “foreigner” (*ben-nēkār*), “native” (*‘ezrāḥ*) “nation” (*gōy*), “inhabitant” (*yôšēb*), “men of the land” (*‘anšē hā‘āreš*), and “people” (*‘am*).

Like Deuteronomistic texts, the Holiness tradition does not portray all foreigners negatively, nor does it treat all foreigners the same. Holiness texts tend to treat the “resident alien” (*gēr*) fairly positively; in many cases, Holiness texts assert that resident aliens should be treated the “same” as native Israelites (*‘ezrāḥ*). Leviticus 19:34 expresses, in a nutshell, how the Holiness tradition views the resident alien: “The resident alien who resides among you shall be to you as the native among you; and you shall love him as yourself, for you were resident aliens in the land of Egypt.” In addition to Lev 19:34, passages that exhort Israelites to treat resident aliens the same as natives *in certain matters* can be found throughout the Holiness tradition (e.g., Exod 12:19, 48–9; Lev 24:22; Num 9:14) and sometimes in the Priestly tradition (Lev 15:15; 16:29). Resident aliens may participate in Passover, may offer sacrifices (if circumcised) and are also subject to most of the same proscriptions and legal sanctions as native Israelites. The end of Leviticus 24 outlines a number of legal scenarios in which the resident alien is subject to the same laws and punishments as native Israelites. Leviticus 24:10–17 even provides a legal drama as an example:

Now the son of an Israelite woman (*‘iššā yiśrē‘ēlīt*), whose father was an Egyptian man (*‘iš mišrī*), went out among the Israelites and

the Israelite woman's son and an Israelite man (*ʾiš hayyiśrēʾēl*⁹⁰) struggled with each other in the camp. And the son of the Israelite woman invoked the Name and cursed [it⁹¹]. So, they brought him to Moses (his mother's name was Shelomit, the daughter of Dibri of the tribe of Dan). They put him under guard to clarify [the matter] for themselves according to the word of Yahweh. And Yahweh spoke to Moses: “Bring the one who cursed outside the camp and let all who have heard lay their hands on his head then let the entire congregation stone him. You shall tell the Israelites the following: Any man who curses his God will bear his sin and one who curses the Name of Yahweh will be put to death—the entire congregation will stone him. Both the resident alien (*gēr*) and the native (*ezrāh*), when he curses the Name, will be put to death.”

Leviticus 24:16 and 22 order the entire congregation to stone to death anyone who curses Yahweh or illegitimately uses his Name regardless of the offender's status as a resident alien or native Israelite. The compiler of Leviticus 24 communicates that the equal punishment faced by both the resident alien and the native Israelite as a consequence of cursing Yahweh and the illegitimate use of his Name should define how Israelites treat the resident alien when it comes to Yahweh's laws and instructions. The command to stone anyone who curses Yahweh's name appears as part of a speech that Yahweh makes to Moses in which he relates that a resident alien who commits other crimes such as murder, assault that results in injury, or killing an animal illegitimately will also be held to the same judgment of *lex talionis* as a native Israelite (Lev 24:17–22). Other Holiness passages echo the sentiments of Lev 24:10ff. by commanding that the resident alien observe the sexual prohibitions of Leviticus 18 and 20, that he afflict himself during Yom Kippur (Lev 16:29), that he avoid the consumption of leavened bread during the festival of Unleavened Bread (Exod 12:19) and that he refrain from eating blood (Lev 17:10–13), like native Israelites.⁹²

A number of interpreters conclude that these passages, and others commanding that there be “one teaching/judgment” for the native and the resident alien (e.g., Exod 12:49; Num 15:14–6), promote a sense of “legal equality” between the resident alien and the Israelite. Others observe that these passages do not concern “legal equality” because Lev 25:45 makes distinctions between (foreign) resident aliens and native Israelites and also because the Holiness passages address Israelites directly and refer to resident aliens, like women and other dependent classes, in the third person.⁹³ Additionally, in one passage at least, the resident alien seems to have a slightly different relationship with Israel's religious practices. The resident alien is not required (or not invited?) to dwell in booths during the Festival of Booths (Lev 23:42).⁹⁴ On the other hand, the resident alien may offer

and participate in sacrifices voluntarily, provided he is circumcised (Exod 12:48; 9:14; 15:14–6). The Holiness tradition permits an Israelite to enslave a non-Israelite (*tôšāb*⁹⁵), but forbids the reverse (Lev 25:45). When Holiness passages say that there is “one law” for the resident alien and the native, there seem to be exceptions to this “one law” and the fact that Israelites can enslave foreigners suggests that the resident alien is in some way socially inferior to the Israelite. Olyan suggests that the different perspectives on the resident alien that appear in Holiness texts are explainable if the references to “one law” for the native Israelite and the resident alien are additions by a later Holiness redactor.⁹⁶ We might consider, however, that these two sentiments are compatible.

A relationship to geographic space seems to be conveyed in the opposition between “native” and “resident alien” as well. The term “native” appears in construct with “the land” to produce the expression “native of the land” (*‘ezrah hā’āreš*, Exod 12:19, 48; Num 9:14). The irony of this expression is due to the tradition’s recognition that Israel is not indigenous to the land, but has supplanted nations who lived there illegitimately. As noted earlier,⁹⁷ an ethnic group’s purported territorial origins need not be based on actual history, but is a matter of identification. Other terms used with “native” are “natives among the Israelites [literally: ‘the sons of Israel’]” (*‘ezrah bibnē yiśrā’ēl*, Num 15:29; Ezek 47:22) and “natives among Israel” (*‘ezrah bēyiśrā’ēl*, Lev 23:42). The use of the word *bēn* (“son”), a term that implies familial links between Israelites, connects the idea of “nativeness” (*‘ezrah*) in the Holiness tradition to ancestry. There does not seem to be a major difference between these three expressions, so the seeming interchangeability of terminology indicates that the idea of land (*‘ezrah hā’āreš*) and peoplehood based on descent (*‘ezrah bibnē yiśrā’ēl*) are both fused in the Holiness concept of nativeness (*‘ezrah*). Joosten also notes that the term “resident alien” has an “ethnic” quality because Lev 24:10, the legal scenario I discussed above, places the gentile “Israelite” (*yiśrē’ēlī*) in opposition to the “resident alien,” and because after generations the descendants of the resident aliens (*bēnē gērīm*), among whom the Israelites may procure slaves, remain distinct from Israelites (Lev 25:47).⁹⁸ In accordance with the theoretical approach I have adopted for analyzing ethnicity in biblical and Mesopotamian texts, the word “native” certainly appears to combine concepts of territory and descent. Interestingly, the legal drama about the misuse of the divine Name demonstrates that for the Holiness tradition (as well as other sources⁹⁹), one’s status as a non-Israelite is transmitted genealogically through men. It is the *father* of the resident alien, an Egyptian, who determines the resident alien status of the condemned man, not the man’s mother, an Israelite from the tribe of Dan (Lev 24:11).

Above I mentioned that Deut 14:21 appears to establish two classes of non-Israelite: the resident alien (*gēr*) and the “foreigner” (*nokrī*). The Holiness tradition also seems to make a similar differentiation between non-Israelites,

though the tradition uses a slightly different idiom for foreigner, *ben-nēkār*, which is derived from the same root as *nokrî* (*nkr*):

Yahweh said to Moses, “This is the statute of the Passover: No foreigner (*ben-nēkār*) may eat it. But as for every man’s slave purchased with money (*miqnat kāsep*), when you have circumcised him, then he may eat it. A guest worker (*tôšāb wěšākîr*¹⁰⁰) shall not eat it...if a resident alien (*gēr*) resides as an alien with you and makes a Passover sacrifice to Yahweh, let every male belonging to him be circumcised and then let him draw near to make it; and he shall be like a native of the land. But no uncircumcised person shall eat it” (Exod 12:43–45, 48¹⁰¹).

Whereas the resident alien may participate in the Passover sacrifice, the Holiness tradition expressly forbids any foreigner (*ben-nēkār*) from partaking, seemingly without exception (Exod 12:43): “No foreigner (*ben-nēkār*) may eat it.” The next verse, Exod 12:44, however, says, “but as for every man’s slave purchased with money, when you have circumcised him, then he may eat it.” I believe that Exod 12:44 clarifies the seemingly blanket exclusion of the foreigner from Passover in 12:43. Because Holiness writers edited the Priestly opus, they are most likely familiar with Genesis 17, and consequently recognize that a foreigner (*ben-nēkār*) can be a slave in the Israelite paterfamilias’s household and that he must be circumcised in accordance with the command in Genesis 17:

And every male among you who is eight days old shall be circumcised throughout your generations: a slave who is born in the household or who is bought with money from among any kind of foreigner (*miqnat kesep mikkol ben-nēkār*), who is not of your descendants (Gen 17:12).

All the men of his household who were born in the household or bought with money from a foreigner (*miqnat kesep mē’ēt ben-nēkār*) were circumcised with him (Gen 17:27).

The slaves who may eat of the Passover sacrifice in Exodus 12:44–8 are *foreigners*. The use of the idiom “bought with money” (*miqnat kesep*), used in Gen 17:12, 23, 27 to refer to Abraham’s foreign slaves, and the term’s reappearance in Exod 12:44 links Abraham’s foreign slaves in Genesis 17 with the slaves mentioned in Exodus 12:44. Thus, Exod 12:44 expounds on the blanket exclusion of foreigners (“no foreigner may eat it”), adding the exception that foreigners who happen to be slaves of an Israelite may participate in the Passover sacrifice because they are a part of the Israelite’s household (Exod 12:46; compare Lev 22:11). In other words, no other person designated as a foreigner may participate in the Passover except foreign slaves of an Israelite.

And what does it mean to be a “foreigner” for the Holiness tradition? Unfortunately, the tradition provides only one brief glimpse into the social activity of a foreigner who is not a slave in Lev 22:25, which assumes that a foreigner can own and sell domesticated animals for use as sacrifices. And even though both the “guest worker” and the foreigner may not eat the Passover sacrifice, the Holiness tradition does not say whether there is a relationship between the guest worker and the foreigner, nor does it give any hints about the precise meaning of *tôšāb wəšākîr*.

One more interesting mention (or rather, lack of mention) of the resident alien requires comment:

As for each man from the house of Israel who slaughters (*šht*) a bull, a sheep or a goat within the camp or who slaughters outside the camp and who has not brought it to the entrance of the Tent of Meeting to offer a gift to Yahweh, bloodguilt will be reckoned to that man. He has poured out blood and that man will be cut off from among his people...They shall no more sacrifice (*zēbah*) their sacrifices to “goats,” after whom they have acted like a *zōnā* (Lev 17:3–7).

This passage, Lev 17:3–7, prohibits *all* slaughter of domesticated animals outside of the Tent of Meeting, but the prohibition is addressed only to Israelites. Whereas Deuteronomy allows for non-religious slaughter of domesticated animals for meat (Deut 12:15–16), Lev 17:3–7 mandates that all domesticated animals to be killed for meat (*šht*), be brought to the Tent of Meeting for a religious sacrifice. Yet, 17:8–9, which prohibits burnt offerings (*‘ōlā*) and sacrifices (*zēbah*)¹⁰² outside of the Tent of Meeting, address both Israelites and resident aliens:

As for any man from the house of Israel or from among the resident aliens who reside as aliens among them, who offers a burnt offering (*‘ōlā*) or sacrifice (*zēbah*) and does not bring it to the doorway of the Tent of Meeting to offer it to Yahweh, that man will be cut off from his people.

Considering that this passage mentions both Israelites and resident aliens, the absence of the resident alien a few verses earlier, in 17:3–7, is odd, since these verses emphasize that an Israelite who slaughters an animal outside of a sacrificial context has committed an act of bloodguilt. Since acts that incur bloodguilt defile the land, it would seem as though the author would want to include both the alien and the native, out of fear that either one would defile the land by slaughtering an animal for meat outside the Tent of Meeting. The rationale provided for the ban on all animal slaughter outside the Tent of Meeting is out of the ordinary as well: “They [the Israelites] shall no longer sacrifice to goats, after which they acted like a *zōnā*” (17:7). The law seems to

suggest that the reason the Israelites cannot engage in non-cultic slaughter of domesticated animals is because they used to sacrifice to “goats.”¹⁰³ But why are sacrifices to “goats” only a threat for Israelites and not resident aliens? Are these “goats” less enticing to resident aliens for some reason? Perhaps the Holiness tradition saw sacrifices to goats as a problem unique to ancient Israel’s history and one that would not seduce resident aliens.

This passage, at the very beginning of the Holiness Code, introduces a major difference between the Holiness and Deuteronomistic traditions. For the Holiness tradition, forbidden religious practices are not typically stigmatized as foreign (with the notable exception of child sacrifice), nor are they especially associated with foreignness. Rather, illicit religious practices are usually threats from within. With respect to sacrifices to “goats,” it appears as though this religious practice is so uniquely a threat for *Israel* that the Holiness tradition does not feel the need to address the resident alien directly.

“Inhabitants” and “men of the land”

Unlike Deuteronomistic passages, the word “inhabitants” (*yôšēbîm*) appears only twice in the Holiness tradition (Lev 18:25; 25:10), and in both instances, it appears with a possessive suffix whose antecedent is the land (“its [i.e., the land’s] inhabitants”). In Lev 18:25, “inhabitants” refers to those who lived in the land of Canaan before the Israelites came to possess it and were “vomited out” because they committed the abominations condemned in Leviticus 18. By contrast, Lev 25:10 exhorts the Israelites to declare “freedom” (*děror*) in the land to its inhabitants—that is, they are to declare the Jubilee year. But the inhabitants who will experience the promised freedom in the Jubilee year are Israelite males who must be released from slavery and return to their patrimonial estates. Since the “inhabitant” of Lev 25:10 is identified as an *Israelite*, not others such as foreign slaves and resident aliens who might technically “inhabit” the land, for the Holiness tradition, “inhabitant” appears to be a term that refers to the people with whom the land is identified.¹⁰⁴ Like Deuteronomistic sources, for the Holiness tradition, the term “inhabitant” highlights the person’s identification with a particular group and, in turn, this group’s identification with the land.¹⁰⁵ Generally, the verb “to dwell/inhabit” (*yšb*), the root for the participial noun, “inhabitant” (*yôšēb*), differs from the verb “to reside as an alien” (*gūr*), though the concepts of “dwelling” and “residing as an alien” can certainly overlap (compare Lev 18:3; 19:34). According to the Holiness tradition, people can also reside illegitimately in a land (Lev 26:32).

Another term used to describe the former inhabitants of the land is “men of the land” (*ʿanšē hāʾāreṣ*, 18:27): “For the men of the land who came before you committed all these abominations, so the land became defiled.” The expression “men of the land,” seems to be a synonym for “inhabitants,” but this expression may signify more than a generic term for “inhabitants,”

or a simple alternative to “people of the land.”¹⁰⁶ The “men of the land” in Lev 18:27 could point back to the idiom “any man” (ʾiṣ ʾiṣ) which began the incest laws in Lev 18:6—as well as the repeated use of “man” (ʾiṣ) in Leviticus 20: “No one (ʾiṣ ʾiṣ) shall approach a near kinsperson to expose nakedness.”

In context, the ʾiṣ of Lev 18:6 refers to male heads of households. As David E.S. Stein argues, the term ʾiṣ is most commonly a relational term, similar to *bēn* (“son”), and as a relational term, ʾiṣ assumes that the individual “man” is part of a larger group or is in some kind of relationship with someone or something.¹⁰⁷ Note also the contrast between “slave” and “man” (with the meaning “anyone”) in Exod 12:44, where the possession of the slave by the “man” is indicated by the construct relationship: “Every slave of a man (ʾiṣ) bought with money and circumcised may eat [the passover sacrifice]...” Slaves are disenfranchised members of the population and so are not included in the category “men,” a term reserved for the most enfranchised members of the society. Holiness laws seem to share this trait with Mesopotamian legal corpora, which also use the generic word “man” (*awilu*, *lú*) to refer to the most enfranchised members of the society.

If the use of “men” refers back to Lev 18:6, the reference may serve as a swipe at the absence of proper family structure among the former inhabitants of the land of Canaan. The “men of the land” may also be similar to the concept of the “men of Israel”—that is the men who were old enough to be a part of a fighting force, attested ubiquitously.¹⁰⁸ Perhaps the “men” of “men of the land” should be translated with sarcastic scare quotes because according to the Holiness tradition, the “men of the land” certainly did not behave the way that a “real man”—that is, a head of household—should. The use of “men of the land” in Lev 18:27 lends further support to my suggestion that when the land vomited out its former “inhabitants” (*yôšēbēm*), they lost their status and identification with the land. Just as “inhabitant” probably means free, land-owning male (Lev 25:10), so “men of the land” could mean the same thing. Because the former inhabitants and men defiled themselves, they were no longer privy to those titles. The terms “inhabitant” and “men” reinforce their alienation from the land and underscore their political disenfranchisement.

“Nations” in the Holiness tradition

When referring to the former inhabitants of the land who have been “cast out” (*šlḥ*) and “vomited out” (*qī*) on account of their abominations, the singular “nation” is used twice (18:28; 20:23) and the plural “nations” is used once (18:24) in the Masoretic Text. Multiple ancient translations of the Hebrew Bible, such as LXX, *Pesh.*, *Tg. Neof.*, read the singular, “nation” as plural, “nations.”¹⁰⁹ Milgrom notes that in 20:23, in the MT, a plural verb appears with the singular “nation,” and the following verse uses “peoples” (plural), making the other manuscripts’ rendering of “nation” as plural more plausible. But Milgrom has doubts about rendering the

singular “nation” in 18:28 as plural, since verbs accompanying “nation” are, unlike 20:23, singular.

One explanation for the interchangeability of singular and plural of “nation” in Leviticus 18 and 20 is that it could reflect the different appellations for the former inhabitants of the land in other biblical sources. Some biblical traditions, such as the Deuteronomistic tradition, almost always see the former inhabitants of the land as a composition of multiple nations. But other, usually earlier sources, sometimes use a single appellative, either Canaanite or Amorite, to describe all the former inhabitants of the land (Amorite in Gen 15:16; 48:22; Amos 2:9–10; Canaanite in Gen 10:19; 12:6; 13:11). Genesis 15 is a particularly poignant example because in the same chapter the inhabitants of Canaan are both described as a singular nation (the Amorite, 15:16) and a plurality of nations (the Kenite, Kenizzite, Kadmonite, Hittite, etc., 15:18–21). The variety of ways by which to describe the former inhabitants of the land in a range of biblical sources suggests a possibility that there was a certain flexibility in literate circles about whether or not to refer to the inhabitants of the land as a single nation or to conceptualize the former inhabitants as separate nations. This is perhaps similar to the way that in careless vernacular terminology in the United States, “Mexican” serves as an appellation for “Latin American” or “Central American” despite the diversity of nations that comprise these regions (El Salvador, Nicaragua, Guatemala, Panama, Honduras, Costa Rica, etc.). Even though the Holiness tradition does not explicitly refer to the former inhabitants of the land of Canaan as “Canaanites,” the fact that it renders “nation” as both singular and plural suggests it could have appropriated other biblical traditions about the “Canaanites” and “Amorites.”

A number of biblical sources refer to Israel as a “nation” (*gôy*), but no Holiness text calls Israel a “nation.”¹¹⁰ Perhaps the Holiness tradition’s negative formula, “do not defile yourselves by any of these things, for by all these [abominations] the nations which I am casting out before you have defiled themselves” (18:24) implies that Israel, as a counterpart to the defiled nations is also a “nation.” The Holiness tradition most certainly claims that Israel is a “people” (*am*) that Yahweh has separated (*bdl*) from all the other peoples:

You shall not follow the practices of the *nation* that I am driving out before you. Because they did all these things, I abhorred them. But I have said to you: You shall inherit their land, and I will give it to you to possess, a land flowing with milk and honey. I am Yahweh your God; I have separated (*bdl*) you from the *peoples* (Lev 20:23–4; compare Lev 11:44–5).

If “nation” and “people” are interchangeable, then the Holiness tradition too conceptualizes Israel as a nation. A less likely, but nevertheless possible solution for the Holiness tradition’s seeming hesitance to refer to Israel as a nation could be that the Holiness tradition appropriates the Balaam cycle’s

idea that Israel “does not think of itself as among the nations” (Num 23:9).¹¹¹ On the other hand, the Holiness tradition’s appropriation of the Priestly tradition’s history, a source that repeatedly uses the term “nation” with respect to Israel, weakens the viability of this solution (especially Gen 17:20). The word, nation, also appears in Lev 25:44’s reference to the “nations” surrounding Israel, from which Israel may procure slaves: “...from the nations surrounding you, you may purchase a male and female slave.”

Who are these nations surrounding Israel? Are they the former inhabitants of the land who have been “cast out” (*šlh*) and “vomited out” because they committed abominations in the land (Lev 18:24–5, 28; 20:23)? Do Holiness texts suggest that a small remnant of “Canaanites” has been left behind, as Deuteronomistic sources do?¹¹² Or have the former inhabitants of the land been so thoroughly “cast out” and “vomited out” that there is no trace left of them? Since the Holiness tradition neither reveals the names of the nations that were expelled, nor does it name those “nations” from which the Israelites may take slaves, we cannot know. Also unlike Deuteronomistic sources, the Holiness tradition does not provide a list of gentiles (e.g., Canaanite, Hittite, Hivvite, etc.) in reference to the nations dispossessed by Israel, and so the reader is left to wonder whether Lev 25:44 refers to the “Canaanite” nations, as outlined in Deuteronomistic sources, or just other neighboring non-Canaanite nations (such as Ammonites, Moabites, Edomites and perhaps even Arameans, Philistines, Tyrians and Sidonians). As I already noted, the Holiness tradition does not even refer to the former inhabitants of the *land of Canaan* as “Canaanites” (Lev 18:3)! I suspect, but cannot prove definitively, that included among the nations referenced in Lev 25:44 are remnants of the *Canaanite* nations that have been “cast out” and “vomited out” of the land.

One reason for my suspicion is that Lev 25:44 claims that these nations are “surrounding” Israel (*šēbībōtēkem*). The Deuteronomistic tradition utilizes *šēbībōtēkem* to refer to nations that pose a threat to the religious life of Israel (Deut 6:14; 13:7; 17:14; Judg 2:12; 2 Kgs 17:15). When it comes to the nations that pose such a threat, Deuteronomistic sources mention the Canaanites most often—though not exclusively (e.g., 1 Kgs 11:1–10; Judg 10:6, which present the people of Aram, Moab, Sidon and the Philistines as threats). The other reason I suspect that the former Canaanite nations are included among the nations from which Israelites may buy slaves is because other literary strata in the Hebrew Bible promote the idea that the Canaanites served as a lowly, vulnerable underclass from which slave labor and corvée labor was extracted—and that this was their expected position (Gen 9:25–7; Josh 9:16–27; 1 Kgs 9:20–2). Because I must draw from other sources, outside the Holiness tradition, none of these examples proves beyond any doubt that the nations referenced in Lev 25:44 are in fact the former inhabitants of the land. The preponderance of the evidence, however, suggests that the nations mentioned in this verse are indeed the Canaanite nations.

The last use of “nation” in the Holiness Code refers to the nations among which Yahweh will scatter the Israelites if they fail to follow the covenant (26:33, 38, 45). The Holiness tradition does not supply any information about the identity of these nations, nor does it provide any description of them. These nations, like the nations in Lev 18:24, 28; 20:23; 25:44 seem to serve as foils against which Israel is compared. Here, obviously, the nations are different from the “vomited out,” dispossessed nations in those passages.

Ethnic foreigners in the Deuteronomistic and Holiness traditions

The language used by Deuteronomistic and Holiness texts strongly suggests that these traditions construct the foreigners they describe as ethnic groups. Both traditions contain passages demonstrating that they categorize peoples in a way in which common ancestry and territorial origins are significant. Deuteronomistic texts claim that nations and peoples have been divided by geographic borders, into regions, and share ancestors. Deuteronomy further grounds the demarcation of nations and peoples in the mythological, cosmic realm. Yahweh himself has established the various boundaries (*gēbûl*) for the nations and apportioned them among the divine beings. In this way, I contend, the Deuteronomistic tradition has in no uncertain terms imbued nations and peoples an inalterable, internal essence. The most powerful way that one can render something permanent, and imbue it with an essence, in the ancient world, is by claiming that God or the gods are responsible. It can also be said that rooting the divisions of people in a cosmic, mythic past is a way of “naturalizing” the existence of these ethnic groups.¹¹³ Though God can certainly destroy or rearrange the boundaries of nationhood and peoplehood, the ethnic group boundaries described in Deuteronomistic texts are as fixed and natural as something can be in the world of ancient Israel.

Holiness texts also employ terminology that emphasizes common ancestry and geographic origins when discussing foreigners. The tradition connects the term “native” (*‘ezrāḥ*) to both descent and territory through the expressions, “native of the land” and “native among the Israelites.” Through the word “native,” the Holiness tradition separates the native Israelite from the resident alien with a term that clearly differentiates the two groups according to ancestry and territory. The laws of the Holiness tradition have been put in the mouth of Yahweh, and so these divisions between the native, resident alien and other foreigners (e.g., the *tôšāb wēšākîr*) are a matter of divine decree. Though the Holiness tradition does not present detailed scenarios in which Yahweh divided people into nations like Genesis 10 or Deut 32:8–9, the implication is that the division between Israelites and non-Israelites is divinely ordained. Furthermore, Yahweh’s decision to separate (*bdl*) Israel from other nations and peoples and the establishment of their inherent holiness was divinely ordered. There does seem to be an important difference between the Holiness tradition and the Deuteronomistic tradition. The Holiness tradition focuses

on essentializing *Israel's* ethnicity—its sense of “peoplehood”—as well as the peoplehood and nationality of the former inhabitants of the land. It is less concerned with essentializing the ethnicity of all the peoples and nations of the world. The Deuteronomistic tradition, by contrast, presents a scenario in which all of the peoples and nations of the world have been essentialized and their peoplehood and nationality have been grounded in the cosmic order.

Notes

- 1 For the pre-Noth observations about Deuteronomy–2 Kings, see Thomas Römer, *The So-Called Deuteronomistic History: A Sociological, Historical and Literary Introduction* (London: T&T Clark, 2005), 16–22 and idem, “Deuteronomistic Historiography: History of Research and Debated Issues” in *Israel Constructs its History: Deuteronomistic Historiography in Recent Research* (ed. Albert de Pury, Thomas Römer and Jean-Daniel Macchi; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 2000), 32–40. Influential Hebrew philologist S.R. Driver was one of the first to systematically call attention to unique Deuteronomistic expressions. For a very useful listing and overview of Deuteronomic expressions, see Moshe Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomic School* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1992), 320–65.
- 2 Martin Noth, *The Deuteronomistic History* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 2001 [1943]), 6. For a summary of Noth’s viewpoint, see 4–11. Originally published in German as *Überlieferungsgeschichte Studien: Die sammelnden und bearbeitenden Geschichtswerke im Alten Testament* (Halle: Niemeyer, 1943).
- 3 Noth, *Deuteronomistic History*, 10.
- 4 See issues with the Deuteronomistic History raised in Eckart Otto, *Deuteronomium 1,1–4,43* (HthKAT; Freiberg in Breisgau: Heider, 2012), 238–48; Pekka M.A. Pitkänen, *Joshua* (AOTC 6; Downer’s Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2010), 51–64; Kurt L. Noll, “Deuteronomistic History or Deuteronomic Debate? (A Thought Experiment),” *JSOT* 31 (2007): 311–45; Ernst A. Knauf, “L’Historiographie Deuteronomiste (DtrG)? existe-t-elle?” in *Israël construit son histoire: L’historiographie deuteronomiste à la lumière des recherches récentes* (ed. Albert de Pury, Thomas Römer, and Jean-Daniel Macchi; Geneva: Labor et Fides, 1996), 409–18; Claus Westermann, *Die Geschichtsbücher des Alten Testaments: gab es ein deuteronomistisches Geschichtswerk?* (Gütersloh: Chr. Kaiser/Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 1994).
- 5 Frank Moore Cross, “The Themes of the Book of Kings and the Structure of the Deuteronomistic History,” in idem, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic: Essays in the History of the Religion of Israel* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1973), 274–89. I will continue to use DtrH as an abbreviation for the Deuteronomistic History. When referring to the two “blocks” of the Cross model (Dtr¹ and Dtr²), I will use pre-exilic and exilic edition/block of DtrH to denote Cross’s Dtr¹ and Dtr².
- 6 Cross, “Themes,” 276–7; Also Gerhard von Rad, *Studies in Deuteronomy* (Studies in Biblical Theology 9; London: SCM Press, 1953), 74–9; idem, *Old Testament Theology* (vol. 1; New York: Harper, 1962), 334–7; Hans Walter Wolff, “Das Kerygma des deuteronomistischen Geschichtswerkes,” *ZAW* 73 (1961): 171–86.
- 7 For a concise but thorough summary of the debates over the Deuteronomistic History, especially the differences between North American scholarship and

- European scholarship, see Richard D. Nelson, “A Response to Thomas C. Römer, *The So-Called Deuteronomistic History*,” *JHS* 9 (2009): 5–14.
- 8 Some contend that the first edition of DtrH appeared earlier, during the reign of Hezekiah (died c. 698 BCE), who also made major cultic reforms (2 Kings 18). Helga Weippert, “Die ‘deuteronomistischen’ Beurteilungen der Könige von Israel und Juda und das Problem der Redaktion des Königsbücher” *Bib* 53 (1972): 301–39; Baruch Halpern, “Sacred History and Ideology: Chronicles’ Thematic Structure—Indications of an Earlier Source,” in *The Creation of Sacred Literature: Composition and Redaction of the Biblical Text* (ed. Richard Elliott Friedman; NES 22; Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1981), 35–54. These authors’ strongest arguments are based on the statements used to describe kings in 1 and 2 Kings: evaluations and summaries of the king’s reign, death and burial notices, etc. A major piece of evidence marshaled for a Hezekian tradition is the evaluation in 2 Kgs 18:5: “after [Hezekiah] there was none like him among all the kings of Judah, nor before him.” Josiah is also said to have been incomparable to the kings before and after him (2 Kgs 23:25). For another perspective on statements of incomparability see Knoppers, “‘There was None Like Him’: Incomparability in the Books of Kings,” *CBQ* 54 (1992): 411–31.
 - 9 Cross also holds that “hopelessness” about the impending wrath of Yahweh characterizes the Exilic block of DtrH because it pins the disaster on the misdeeds of king Manasseh (c. 697–642 BCE), which not even the good reign of Josiah could undo (“Themes,” 285–6).
 - 10 Rudolf Smend, “Das Gesetz und die Völker: Ein Beitrag zur deuteronomistischen Redaktionsgeschichte,” in *Probleme biblischer Theologie: Gerhard von Rad zum 70 Geburtstag* (ed. Hans Walter Wolff; Munich: C. Kaiser, 1971), 494–509; also idem, *Die Entstehung des Alten Testaments* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1978).
 - 11 Walter Dietrich, *Prophetie und Geschichte* (FRLANT 108; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1972); idem, “Prophetie im deuteronomistischen Gesichtswerk” in *The Future of the Deuteronomistic History* (ed. Thomas Römer; Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2000), 47–66.
 - 12 Timo Veijola. *Das Königtum in der Beurteilung der deuteronomistischen Historiographie: Eine redaktionsgeschichtliche Untersuchung* (Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedekatemia, 1977).
 - 13 Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy*, 2. Another good summary of Deuteronomistic ideology can be found in Noth, *Deuteronomistic History*, 89–99.
 - 14 See 2 Sam 5:20; 15:7, two important texts that seem to refer to local manifestations of Yahweh. In the former, Yahweh assists with David’s victory and he names the place of victory Baal-perizim, showing that *ba’al* (“lord”) was an epithet used to refer to Yahweh (see also Hos 2:16 for another possible example). In 2 Sam 15:7, Absalom must return to Hebron to fulfill a vow to “Yahweh-in-Hebron” suggesting that there could be multiple, local manifestations of Yahweh with their own cultic requirements and protocol. On multiple manifestations of Yahweh and their relationship to the epithet *ba’al* see Baruch Halpern, “Brisker Pipes than Poetry: The Development of Israelite Monotheism,” in *Judaic Perspectives on Ancient Israel* (ed. Jacob Neusner, Baruch Levine, and Ernest S. Frerichs; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987), 87–102; P. Kyle McCarter, “Aspects of the Religion of the Israelite Monarchy: Biblical and Epigraphic Data,” in *Ancient Israelite Religion: Essays in*

- Honor of Frank Moore Cross* (ed. Patrick D. Miller, Paul D. Hanson, and S. Dean McBride; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987), 137–55.
- 15 The term “monotheism” may be an inappropriate term for the cultic practices of ancient Israel and biblical presentations of Yahweh. For some reviews of the problems with the application of the term “monotheism” to ancient Israel, see Robert Gnuse, “The Emergence of Monotheism in Ancient Israel: A Survey of Recent Scholarship,” *Religion* 29 (1999): 315–36; Juha Pakkala, *Intolerant Monotheism in the Deuteronomistic History* (Publications of the Finnish Theological Society 76; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1999), 1–20, 224–33. Römer believes that the parts of DtrH written in the pre-exilic and exilic periods do not express a “clear monotheistic theology” unlike Second Isaiah and what he considers to be late Persian period texts of DtrH (Römer, *So-Called*, 114, 173–4). Even the “monotheism” of Second Isaiah has been challenged by Saul M. Olyan, “Is Isaiah 40–55 Really Monotheistic?” *JANER* 12 (2012): 190–201.
 - 16 Steven L. McKenzie and John Van Seters make a strong case for one author of DtrH—a case with which I disagree. See McKenzie, *The Trouble with Kings* (Leiden: Brill, 1991) and Van Seters, *In Search of History: Historiography in the Ancient World and the Origins of Biblical History* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1983).
 - 17 For now, the question of whether or not other books, such as Hosea, Jeremiah, and the other sections of the Pentateuch, show signs of Deuteronomistic redaction will be tabled.
 - 18 Raymond F. Person, *The Deuteronomic School: History, Social Setting and Literature* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2002), 7.
 - 19 David M. Carr, *Writing on the Tablet of the Heart: The Origins of Scripture and Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 36. See also idem, *The Formation of the Hebrew Bible and New Reconstruction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011).
 - 20 For an overview, see Karel van der Toorn, *Scribal Culture and the Making of the Hebrew Bible* (Cambridge, Mass.: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 126–9. This is not to say that multiple hands cannot be detected even within the “blocks.” Rather, the idea that all of the authors can be identified as discrete layers seems difficult to sustain. See Carr, *Formation*, for examples of multiple contributions in Mesopotamian sources, 37–48.
 - 21 Though certainly, some sources can be isolated. For example, an apology for King David and a Succession Narrative for King Solomon can be detected within the early layer of the Deuteronomistic History. But again, these are large chunks of text, not an example of different authors tinkering here and there. Moreover, Albertz notes that the “strata model” has not been tested against the entire text of the Deuteronomistic History (*Israel in Exile*, 275).
 - 22 For other examples of single authors compiling complex texts in Mesopotamia, such as Kabti-ilani-Marduk, author of the *Poem of Erra* and Saggil-kinam-ubbib, compiler of the “Babylonian Theodicy,” see van der Toorn, *Scribal Culture*, 27–44.
 - 23 For some examples, see Richard D. Nelson, *The Double Redaction of the Deuteronomistic History* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1981), 43–98; Jon Levenson, “Who Inserted the Book of the Torah?” *HTR* 68 (1975): 203–33, who attributes the exilic frame of Deuteronomy (4:1–40; 29:21–8; 30; 31:16–22, 24–9) to the exilic author.

- 24 McKenzie refers to Römer’s work as a “compromise” between North American and Continental scholarship (“Response,” 15).
- 25 See n. 8.
- 26 For example, Lohfink points out that the composition of texts is unlike the process of a “movement” (*Bewegung*) as it is traditionally understood (e.g., “Civil Rights Movement”) because movements are characterized more by goals than by texts. He suggests, alternatively, that there may have indeed been a movement in Judah that promoted centralization of worship and greater national independence, in which the authors of Deuteronomy–2 Kings participated, or which they supported, but that the idea of “deuteronomism” as a movement would not be appropriate (“Was There a Deuteronomistic Movement?” in *Those Elusive Deuteronomists* [ed. Linda S. Schearing and Steven L. McKenzie; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1999], 36–66). For the view that there may be a relationship between a “deuteronomistic” movement in the Northern Kingdom and the prophet Hosea, see Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy*, 366–70. There must have been scribal institutions in ancient Israel and Judah, so it is certainly possible that there was a scribal guild—or “school”—that shared Deuteronomistic ideology in ancient Judah (Person, *Deuteronomistic School*, 7, 65–102). Yet, there is no clear evidence that scribal families or institutions divided themselves according to ideology. It seems equally possible that different ideologies could be housed in one guild. The scholarly reconstructions of a Deuteronomistic “school” do not explain how, say, the Deuteronomistic “school” developed with respect to other rival “schools,” such as the Priestly or Holiness “schools.” For instance, Person argues that a “Deuteronomistic school” was connected with the Temple establishment and edited work heavily in the Persian period in a manner similar to Ujdahorresnet of Egypt. If that is the case, with what institution were the exilic and post-exilic Priestly and Holiness “schools” connected? And if these schools were also attached to the Temple, were these different “schools” housed in the same establishment? It is quite possible, but until the scribal guild theory is fleshed out more, I remain hesitant to use the term, “school.”
- 27 For example, McKenzie (*Trouble*, 7–14) believes that the incorporation of Northern prophetic cycles in DtrH are “problematic.” I think it fits well with the idea that the authors of DtrH are ideologues, who would incorporate Israelite prophetic cycles both to give the history legitimacy, to reinforce the idea that Yahweh appointed prophets as his “servants” to carry out his word, and because many of the prophetic stories place Israelite kings (for whom there is no love lost in DtrH) in a negative light.
- 28 Levenson, “Torah,” 203–33.
- 29 L.A. Snijders, זור/זר, TDOT, 55. Snijders argues that the root *zûr* II seems to have a basic spatial meaning: to “turn aside, deviate, go away,” and the participle *zâr* should be translated “one who distances or removes himself” (ibid., 53). I wonder, however, if this translation works in all of the instances of *zâr* in which a person has not removed himself of herself from something (e.g., the *zâr* who may not eat the holy foods; it seems as though the *zâr* does not “remove himself,” but is excluded by law).
- 30 Helmer Ringgren, נכר, TDOT, 425. Also see Ringgren’s Ugaritic example, KTU 1.14, II, 48, 50: “Let the newly married man go forth (to battle), let him bring his wife to another, his beloved to someone else (*nkr*).”

- 31 Ibid.
- 32 Saul M. Olyan, “Stigmatizing Associations: The Alien and Practices Associated with Aliens in Biblical Classification Schemas,” in *The Foreigner and the Law: Perspectives from the Hebrew Bible and the Ancient Near East* (ed. Reinhard Achenbach, Rainer Albertz, and Jakob Wöhrle; BZABR 16; Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2011), 1–2, n.2.
- 33 Some translations render *’ēlōhē nēkar-hā’āreš* in Deut 31:16 as “gods of the foreigners of the land” (AV, NASB). This would be a very unusual and awkward expression for the Deuteronomistic tradition. Some LXX manuscripts omit *hā’āreš* altogether. The best translation, in my view is “foreign gods of the land,” which is both true to the text and is closer to usual Deuteronomistic expressions for illegitimate deities.
- 34 Though Deuteronomy 32 is possibly an independent, originally preexilic hymn appropriated by the Deuteronomistic tradition. See Paul Sanders, *The Provenance of Deuteronomy 32* (Leiden: Brill, 1996); Matthew Thiessen, “The Form and Function of the Song of Moses,” *JBL* 123 (2004): 401–24; Mark Leuchter, “Why Is the Song of Moses in the Book of Deuteronomy?” *VT* 57 (2007): 295–317. That the Deuteronomistic tradition appropriated Deuteronomy 32 can be shown by its influence on the exilic frame of Deuteronomy (Levenson, “Book of the Torah,” 215–8). In fact, according to Levenson, this very verse has influenced (exilic) Deut 4:25; 31:29. Deut 32:16 may be earlier than the Deuteronomistic tradition, but the tradition seems to endorse this verse’s ideas.
- 35 Some contend that 1 Kings 11 is a late composition. See Michael Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 125–6. For a defense of an earlier date, see Gary N. Knoppers, “Sex, Religion and Politics: The Deuteronomist on Intermarriage,” *HAR* 14 (1994): 121–41.
- 36 Deut 14:21 says that both the “foreigner” (*nokri*) and “resident alien” (*gēr*) are permitted to eat animal carcasses, whereas Israelites, who are a holy people to Yahweh, may not. The passage makes a distinction between “resident aliens” and “foreigners,” showing that for the Deuteronomistic tradition, (non-Israelite) “resident aliens” and “foreigners” are different kinds of non-Israelites (Saul M. Olyan, *Rites and Rank: Hierarchy in Biblical Representations of Cult* [Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2000], 77).
- 37 My argument here should also be seen as a response to those who believe that the concept of “brotherhood” is largely “ethical” and de-emphasizes “ethnic” characteristics. The concern with “descent” (*zera’*) inherent in the brother/foreigner dichotomy seems to undercut that argument. See Lothar Perlitt, “Ein einzig Volk von Brüdern: Zur deuteronomischen Herkunft der biblischen Bezeichnung ‘Bruder’” in idem, *Deuteronomium-Studien* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1994), 50–73.
- 38 LXX omits *babbayit*.
- 39 Pp. 32–35.
- 40 Some translations suggest that the nations are given an inheritance instead of the divine beings, rendering: “when the Most High gave the nations their inheritance...” (JPS, ESV, NASB). The difference in translations can be pinpointed to two issues. The first issue is that the Hiphil of *nāḥal* (“to bequeath”) takes two direct objects, one for the thing bequeathed and another for the person(s) inheriting, which creates some ambiguity about who receives what. The larger context of Deuteronomy 32 seems to suggest, however, that it is the divine beings who receive an inheritance and not the nations because Yahweh claims Israel as

his own portion (*hēleg*) and inheritance (*naḥālā*), and the text contrasts his inheritance with the inheritance of the other divine beings (32:9; also 9:26, 29). The other source of contention is that Deut 4:19 and 29:25 say that gods themselves are, in fact, “apportioned” (*hālaq*) to “peoples” (*‘ammūm*) and to Israel. I would suggest that there are two related, but distinct, expressions reflected in 32:8 versus 4:19 and 29:25. A god can be received as an inheritance or a god can receive a nation or group as an inheritance. In Deuteronomy, the Levites receive Yahweh, a God, as an inheritance (Deut 10:9; 18:2, also Josh 13:33), which, I propose, differs from 32:9; 9:26, 29, where Yahweh claims his people, Israel, as an inheritance. The difference between a god inheriting a people and a people inheriting a god is unclear (if there is any difference at all) but there appears to be enough evidence to show that they are two different expressions. The idea that the Levites “inherit” Yahweh (understood as the priesthood) also appears in the Priestly tradition (Num 18:20).

- 41 Like most scholars, following Qumran manuscript 4QDeutⁱ and supplanting the MT “sons of Israel” (*bēnē yiśrā’ēl*) with “sons of God” (*bēnē ’ēlōhīm*). For the use of the term “sons of God” as a reference to divine beings, see also Gen 6:2, 4; Job 1:6; 2:1; 38:7. LXX^{AB} reads *angelōn theou*, which possibly interprets *bēnē ’ēlōhīm* in a theologically palatable manner, also reflected in Sira 17:17. The reading of “sons of Israel” outside of the MT is found in other manuscript traditions of the Hebrew Bible (Samaritan Pentateuch, the Symmachus, Theodotion and Aquila manuscripts of LXX, Vulgate, Peshitta, Targum Onkelos) and relates the 70 “fathers” who went to Egypt in Deut 10:22 to the number of nations. See discussion in Richard D. Nelson, *Deuteronomy* (Louisville, Ky.: John Knox, 2002), 367. See also David E. Stevens’s argument that an emphasis on angelology in the Hellenistic period influenced the Qumran manuscript and Greek traditions in “Does Deuteronomy 32:8 Refer to ‘Sons of God’ or ‘Sons of Israel’?” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 154 (1997): 131–41. Stevens suggests theological motivation and/or haplography (*yiśrā’ēl* → *’ēl*) prompted the Qumran and LXX^{AB} readings. He also believes that “sons of God” is incompatible with Deuteronomy’s “anti-polytheistic” outlook. Leaving aside the problem with suggesting that Deuteronomy’s views are “anti-polytheistic” (was the Qumran community more “polytheistic”?), Stevens’s proposal clashes with the idea that Yahweh inherited his people in 32:9. The very force of the statement that Yahweh inherited his own people is dependent on the idea that other gods received their own peoples.
- 42 See 2 Sam 22:14 and Ps 97:9 for a more explicit identification.
- 43 Note that Ps 82:6 [ET 82:5] says that the “gods...sons of the Most High” (*’ēlōhīm ...bēnē ’elyōn*) will fall and that God (*’ēlōhīm*) will inherit all the nations (*tinḥal bēkol haggōyīm*), an interesting sentiment when considered alongside the claim of Deut 32:8 that other deities inherited the nations and Yahweh inherited Israel. See Chapter Seven for more on this passage.
- 44 The city of *hmry* was *’rṣ nḥlt* of Mot and *ḥkpt* was the inheritance of Qadeš-Amrur (CAT/KTU 1.4, VIII, 11–14; 1.5, II, 15f; Qadeš-Amrur: CAT/KTU 1.3, IV, 15f). See Edward Lipiński, נחל, TDOT, 330.
- 45 Lipiński, נחל, 327.
- 46 See Kathryn E. Slanski, “Classification, Historiography and Monumental Authority: The Babylonian Entitlement *narûs* (kudurrus),” *JCS* 52 (2000): 95–114.

- 47 The unity of Deut 4:1–40 has been cogently defended, as has its function as part of the exilic “frame” for the core of the pre-exilic Deuteronomy (Deuteronomy 5–28). See Levenson, “Torah,” 203–33.
- 48 On this question, also see Clements, יג, TDOT, 427.
- 49 Ephraim A. Speiser, “‘People’ and ‘Nation’ of Israel,” *JBL* 79 (1960): 157.
- 50 *Ibid.*, 160.
- 51 See also discussion in Norman K. Gottwald, *The Tribes of Yahweh: A Sociology of the Religion of Liberated Israel 1250–1050 BCE* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1999 [1979]), 509–11. In certain contexts, *‘am* may refer to social/military classes within Israel.
- 52 Destruction of peoples: Exod 33:3, 5; Deut 2:21; 9:26; Josh 7:7; Jer 6:26; 15:7; 48:42; Ezek 25:7; Est 3:6; 7:4; Ps 106:34; 1 Chr 5:25; establishment of peoples: Deut 28:9; 29:12 (ET 29:13).
- 53 Clements, יג, TDOT, 429.
- 54 Literally, *hebel* refers to the “measuring-line” used to apportion property (Amos 7:17) or separate people (2 Sam 8:2, a gruesome example), but it can also denote an actual piece of land.
- 55 Note how Jeremiah 1 and Hosea 4:1 use the expression “inhabitants of the land” to refer to Israelites and Judahites. Have Jeremiah and Hosea turned rhetoric, traditionally used against the Canaanites, against Israel? Perhaps the practice of using this terminology to describe Israel was also picked up by post-exilic prophetic traditions as well (Joel 1:2, 14; 2:1; Zech 11:6).
- 56 See Sanders’s linguistic analysis (*Deuteronomy* 32, 295–436). Some, like Cross, date the poem fairly early (see *Canaanite Myth*, 264 n.193).
- 57 Levenson, “Book of the Torah,” 212–8; Richard Elliott Friedman, “From Egypt to Egypt: Dtr1 and Dtr2,” in *Traditions in Transformation: Turning Points in Biblical Faith* (ed. Baruch Halpern and Jon D. Levenson; Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1981), 187; Nelson holds that the text was inserted fairly late (*Deuteronomy*, 369); Römer argues that the text could have been inserted by the editors of the entire Pentateuch (*Deuteronomistic History*, 181). My own view is closest to Levenson’s (see n.34).
- 58 For this view of the compositional history of Genesis 10, see Bustenay Oded, “‘The Table of Nations (Genesis 10)’: A Socio-Cultural Approach,” *ZAW* 98 (1986): 17–21.
- 59 August Klostermann coined the term “Holiness Code” (*Heiligkeitgesetz*). Klostermann was among several nineteenth-century biblical scholars who argued that Leviticus 17/18–26 constituted a discrete source. See Klostermann, *Der Pentateuch: Beiträge zu seinem Verständnis und seiner Entstehungsgeschichte* (Leipzig: M. Deichert, 1893), especially “Ezechiel und das Heiligkeitgesetz,” 385, in the same volume.
- 60 Karl Heinrich Graf, *Die geschichtlichen Bücher des Alten Testaments: Zwei historisch-kritische Untersuchungen* (Leipzig: Weigel, 1866), 75–83. Graf believed that Ezekiel authored the Holiness Code, something rejected by Abraham Kuenen and scholars who followed (Kuenen, *The Religion of Israel to the Fall of the Jewish State* [vol. 2.; London: Williams and Norgate, 1874/5], 189–92). See discussion in Christophe Nihan, *From Priestly Torah to Pentateuch: A Study in the Composition of the Book of Leviticus* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007), 1–2.

- 61 This section will use the vocabulary of earlier source critics when describing their theories.
- 62 Kuenen, *Religion*, 150. Nihan has a good summary of scholarly perspectives on the “Holiness Code” in *Priestly Torah*, 1–11.
- 63 Wellhausen believed that P was composed during the Exilic period. For Wellhausen the Holiness Code was part of the secondary “legal” supplement to P. Wellhausen, and German scholars who followed him (e.g., Martin Noth), held that P was composed of two layers Pg (g = *Grundschrift*) and Ps (s = *sekundär*) (*Die Composition des Hexateuchs und der historischen Bücher des Alten Testaments* [Berlin: G. Reimer, 1899]). See also Martin Noth, *Überlieferungsgeschichte des Pentateuchs* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1948), 7–19. The former (Pg) was a strictly narrative source about Israel’s origins and the latter (Ps) was a legal supplement added to the original narrative. At the time, Kuenen laid out problems with a rigid separation between “narrative” and “laws” (*A Historical-Critical Inquiry into the Origin and Composition of the Hexateuch*, [trans. Phillip A. Wicksteed; London: Macmillan, 1886], xx–xxiv). The model dividing P into two strata (Pg and Ps) continues to be influential to this day, especially within German biblical scholarship.
- 64 Though see the important dissenting opinion of Erhard Blum, “Issues and Problems in the Contemporary Debate Regarding the Priestly Writings,” in *The Strata of the Priestly Writings: Contemporary Debate and Future Directions* (ed. Sarah Shectman and Joel S. Baden; ATANT 95; Zürich: Theologischer Verlag Zürich, 2009), 31–44. Blum agrees that Leviticus 17–26 is distinctive, but holds that “the much discussed characteristics of Leviticus 17–26 are neither exclusive to this corpus nor do they demand diachronic solutions. On the contrary, Leviticus 17–26* forms an essential part in the overall conception of P” (39). The differences between Leviticus 17–26 and the rest of P are not sufficient to posit any “diachronic decomposition” or discrete editorial layers. See also idem, *Studien zur Komposition des Pentateuch* (BZAW 189; Berlin: de Gruyter, 1990), 229–85.
- 65 Keunen, *Religion*, 150.
- 66 See n. 62, above.
- 67 Karl Elliger, *Leviticus* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1966), 14–20.
- 68 Elliger’s view that the Holiness Code was a supplement to Pg was contested and is not commonly held (but see Alfred Cholewiński, *Heiligkeitgesetz und Deuteronomium: Eine vergleichende Studie* [AnBib 66; Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1976], 338). Elliger’s main contribution, in my opinion, is the idea that the authors of the Holiness Code actually composed their text in response to P.
- 69 Israel Knohl, *The Sanctuary of Silence: The Priestly Torah and the Holiness School* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), 95–6, 101–3. With respect to the book of Deuteronomy, Knohl believes that the “Holiness School” authored Deut 32:48–52 because it promotes “sanctification of God among the people of Israel” which is an important theme for the Holiness School (cp. Deut 32:51 and Num 20:12).
- 70 Jacob Milgrom, *Leviticus 17–22* (AB 3A; New York: Doubleday, 2000), 1349–51.
- 71 Knohl, *Sanctuary*, 169–70; Milgrom, *Leviticus 17–22*, 1341–4.
- 72 Knohl, *Sanctuary*, 180–6.
- 73 Saul M. Olyan, “Exodus 31:12–17: The Sabbath According to H or the Sabbath According to P and H?” *JBL* 124 (2005): 201–9; Nihan, *Priestly Torah*, 401–543; Jeffrey Stackert, *Rewriting the Torah: Literary Revision in Deuteronomy*

- and the Holiness Legislation (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007); idem, “The Holiness Legislation and Its Pentateuch Sources: Revision, Supplementation and Replacement,” in Shectman and Baden, *Strata*, 187–204; Knohl, *Sanctuary*, 8–40.
- 74 See n. 26 and also Milgrom, who eschews the use of the word “school” because he sees no evidence of continuous literary activity (“H_R in Leviticus and Elsewhere in the Torah,” in *The Book of Leviticus: Composition and Reception* [ed. Rolf Rendtorff and Robert A. Kugler; Leiden: Brill, 2003]), 25. Nihan prefers “Holiness School” (Nihan, *Priestly Torah*, 562–75).
- 75 Joel S. Baden, “Identifying the Original Stratum of P,” in *Strata*, 27.
- 76 See discussion in Nihan, *Priestly Torah*, 441–2.
- 77 Milgrom argues that there was an exilic layer of H, added during the exile, which he refers to as H_R, but asserts that 95% of H was written in the eighth century. Knohl also recognizes two H layers. See especially Milgrom, “H_R in Leviticus,” 24–40.
- 78 E.g., Blum, “Priestly Writings,” 32; also, Knohl, *Sanctuary*, 208–9. Though note that DtrH permits the non-cultic slaughter of animals, something the Holiness tradition apparently does not (compare Deut 12:15–16).
- 79 See discussion in Milgrom, *Leviticus* 23–27, 2316–7.
- 80 Knohl, *Sanctuary*, 206–12, 218–9. Knohl dates the Holiness tradition to “after Ahaz’s rise to power...but preceding Hezekiah’s reforms” (209).
- 81 Chapter Five, n. 35.
- 82 See discussion in Saul M. Olyan, “An Eternal Covenant with Circumcision as Its Sign: How Useful a Criterion for Dating and Source Analysis,” in *The Pentateuch: International Perspectives and Current Research* (ed. Thomas B. Dozeman et al.; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011): 347–8.
- 83 Olyan, “Eternal Covenant,” 351–5; Nihan, *Priestly Torah*, 539–40.
- 84 Indeed, the Holiness tradition seems very concerned with sacred times, since the Holiness tradition has gone through a great deal of trouble in revising the Sabbath legislation of the Priestly tradition (see n. 73).
- 85 Jan Joosten, *People and Land in the Holiness Code: An Exegetical Study of the Ideational Framework of the Law in Leviticus 17–22* (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 88.
- 86 Walther Zimmerli, *Ezekiel* (vol. 2; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983), 532.
- 87 Offered in response to exegetes who see pre-monarchic, tribal and “rural-agricultural” elements in the Holiness tradition. It is indeed likely that the Holiness tradition indexed premonarchic traditions, but the overall scenario is highly idealized. The appeal to these ancient traditions (e.g., the Jubilee [compare Ezek 46:17], kinsman redeemers, etc.) could serve to bring the focus of the exile community to the family. The idea that the scenarios envisioned by the Holiness tradition were “utopian” vision to legitimate post-exilic land claims is rejected here. See informative summary in John S. Bergsma, *The Jubilee from Leviticus to Qumran: A History of Interpretation* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 61–79.
- 88 For a review of the Wellhausenian view and current perspectives on the relationship between the Holiness tradition and Ezekiel, see Michael A. Lyons, *From Law to Prophecy: Ezekiel’s Use of the Holiness Code* (LHBOTS 507; New York: T&T Clark, 2009), 35–46.
- 89 See the debates between Milgrom and Lyons, who believe that the Holiness tradition inspired Ezekiel, and Klaus Grünwaldt and Baruch Levine who believe that Ezekiel inspired the Holiness tradition (Milgrom, *Leviticus* 23–27, 2349–52; Grünwaldt, *Das Heiligkeitgesetz Leviticus 17–26* [Berlin: de Gruyter, 1999], 350,

- 365–6, 370–3; Levine, *Leviticus* [Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1989], 280–1; idem, “The Epilogue to the Holiness Code: A Priestly Statement on the Destiny of Israel,” in *Judaic Perspectives on Ancient Israel* [ed. Jacob Neusner et al.; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987, 9–34].
- 90 The Samaritan Pentateuch reads *’iš yisrē’ēlī*, without the definite article.
- 91 It is unclear in Lev 24:11 that the son of the Israelite woman is actually cursing Yahweh, but the narrative makes it clear in 24:15, 23.
- 92 Saul M. Olyan, *Rites and Rank: Hierarchy in Biblical Representations of Cult* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2000), 70.
- 93 Joosten, *People and Land*, 61–75.
- 94 Olyan, *Rites and Rank*, 71.
- 95 The noun *gēr* does not appear in this passage. Rather, the *tōšāb* “lives as a resident alien” (*gūr*) among the Israelites, see n. 100 below and Chapter Five, n. 1.
- 96 Olyan, *Rites and Rank*, 72, esp. n. 53.
- 97 Chapter Two, pp. 33–34.
- 98 Joosten, *People and Land*, 33, 82.
- 99 See the masculine gentiles for Ammonite and Moabite in Deut 23:4–9 (Olyan, *Rites and Rank*, 82).
- 100 Following Olyan, *Rites and Rank*, 68 n. 35 and taking the expression as hendiadys. But note Lev 22:10 where *tōšāb* and *šākir* are broken up by the “priest.” I take *tōšāb* by itself to be the functional equivalent of *gēr*, especially since it is used most often with the verb *gūr* or the noun *gēr* (Lev 25:6, 23, 40, 45).
- 101 For arguments that Exod 12:43–9 is a Holiness composition, see Knohl, *Sanctuary*, 21–2.
- 102 The terminology surrounding non-religious slaughter of domesticated animals seems to differ between the Deuteronomistic and Holiness traditions. In Deut 12:13–15, the verb *zbh* can refer to non-religious slaughter (Deut 12:15). Animals offered as burnt offerings (*’ōlā*) must be brought to one place, the temple in Jerusalem (Deut 12:13). The Holiness tradition, however, carefully distinguishes non-religious slaughter from religious sacrifice by using different verbs. For non-religious slaughter of domesticated animals, which is totally forbidden to Israelites, the verb *šht* appears. The Holiness tradition seems to reserve *zbh* only for religious slaughter. The tradition fears that non-religious slaughter (*šht*) will lead to religious slaughter (*zbh*) to “goats.”
- 103 Whatever these are. See Chapter Six, 192 n. 35.
- 104 See p. 109.
- 105 For Deuteronomistic texts using the expression “inhabitants of the land,” see Josh 2:9, 24; 7:9; 9:24; Judg 1:32–3; 2:2; 1 Sam 27:8; 2 Sam 5:6.
- 106 Milgrom, *Leviticus 17–22*, 1580.
- 107 David E.S. Stein, “The Noun *’iš* in Biblical Hebrew: A Term of Origins,” *JHS* 8 (2008): 1–24.
- 108 Lawrence Kutler, “A Structural Semantic Approach to Israelite Communal Terminology,” *JANES* 14 (1982): 69–77. It is also commonly noted that the *’iš* is the basic unit of the *’am* (“people”), another term for the military force of a nation in some contexts (see e.g., Josh 8:12; 10:24; 1 Sam 26:2; Isa 3:2; Ezek 39:20).
- 109 Milgrom, *Leviticus 17–22*, 1582.

- 110 Even if one were to assume that all of the passages attributed to the Holiness “School” by Knohl are truly Holiness texts (Knohl, *Sanctuary of Silence*, 101–3), not a single one of these passages contains the word “nation” (*gōy*) in reference to Israel. Some Priestly passages which have alleged Holiness interpolations contain the word “nation” in reference to Israel—especially Genesis 17.
- 111 For the Holiness tradition’s possible interest in the Balaam cycle, see Chapter Six, pp. 195–6.
- 112 See Chapter Five, pp. 155–9 and, e.g., Josh 13:13; 15:63; 16:10; Judg 1:21, 27–33; 1 Kgs 9:21.
- 113 See discussion on “naturalization,” Chapter Two, pp. 26–28.

“A NON-PEOPLE, A FOOLISH NATION”

Caricatures of foreigners in Deuteronomistic texts

The last chapter explored the language of foreignness and nativeness in the Deuteronomistic and Holiness traditions. I argued that the terminology in both of these traditions manifest a concept of ethnicity, as I understand it, because they suggest the peoples and nations they describe, share common ancestry and common territorial origins. This chapter will look at the specific characterizations of foreigners found in the Deuteronomistic tradition (Deuteronomy–2 Kings). The central focus will be the book of Deuteronomy, though I will certainly reference other relevant Deuteronomistic texts. I will also mention biblical texts outside of the Deuteronomistic corpus that can illuminate ideas presented in the tradition.

While a reconstruction of Israel’s history is not my focus here, thinking about the date and provenance of the Deuteronomistic tradition allows the interpreter to situate references to foreigners in a plausible social setting. Were the caricatures of foreigners composed during the time in which sitting kings, such as Hezekiah and Josiah, ruled Judah? Or did these polemics develop in the context of the Babylonian Exile, after the destruction of the monarchy? The answers to questions like these can alter how a reader understands these polemics, or how one reconstructs the audience that might have received them. As I will show later in this chapter, some scholars contend that the foreigners that Deuteronomistic tradition depicts are largely fictional and just serve a rhetorical and literary purpose. And so, situating the Deuteronomistic tradition in its social and cultural background can impact the way that we read the polemics. It can help answer the question: what were the authors trying to do with their portrayal of foreigners?

In Chapter Three, I argued that geography was very important in the portrayals of foreigners in Mesopotamian texts because peoples who are described as residing in liminal places such as the mountains or the steppe (the “periphery” of Mesopotamia) were stereotyped as “uncivilized” and brutish. As we will see, there is a significant shift in emphasis with respect to the biblical texts. Biblical texts make religious practices a much more prominent feature in their caricatures of foreigners. While accusations of impiety and inferior religious practices do appear in Mesopotamian texts, Mesopotamian

writers seem to be more interested in the fact that foreigners lack the features of urban life and a developed, imperial state.

When it comes to the Deuteronomistic tradition, the inferior religion of foreigners is not just a way to disparage them. The tradition also claims that foreign religious practices pose a direct threat to Israelites' ability to worship their own God properly (e.g., Deut 7:1–6). The danger posed by foreign religion points to another major difference between biblical texts and Mesopotamian texts. The foreigners negatively portrayed by Deuteronomistic texts are not, for the most part, described as peoples who live on the periphery of the earth (save a notable exception in Deut 28:49–52). Rather, the foreigners caricatured by these biblical passages are said to reside in very close proximity to Israelites. The Deuteronomistic tradition draws deep distinctions between the Canaanites, who are—according to biblical narratives—the autochthonous inhabitants of the land of Israel dispossessed by the Israelites and the Israelites, by highlighting the allegedly “foreign” religion of the Canaanites. The threat posed by the Canaanites prompts Deuteronomistic writers, for the most part, to advocate the extermination of the Canaanites. When the tradition does not call for extermination, it opposes intermarriage and other forms of social intercourse with them. There are some notable exceptions to this general call to exterminate and totally exclude Canaanites from the community of Israelites. But in each of these exceptional cases, the Deuteronomistic disdain for the Canaanite comes through.

Negative characterizations of foreigners

The discussion that follows, which focuses on negative characterizations of foreigners, will not give much attention to the “resident alien” (*gēr*) in the Deuteronomistic tradition, since the portrayal of the resident alien is largely positive and the root *gūr* (“to reside as an alien”) is used to refer to natives as well as non-Israelites. In the Deuteronomistic tradition, “resident aliens” are economically disadvantaged people, who can either be foreign or native.¹ The trait that seems to distinguish the resident alien from others is that they do not have inheritable property within Israel, making them dependent on another property holder who allows the resident alien to use the land.² The Deuteronomistic legal material requires that the resident alien be treated with justice (Deut 1:16; 10:18; 24:17; 27:19) and love (Deut 10:19). Some Deuteronomistic passages refer to foreign resident aliens (Deut 14:21), while others seem to address native resident aliens (Deut 18:6; Judg 17:7–9; 19:16). Someone can be an alien with respect to a town (Deut 18:6), or with respect to a larger geographic area such as a region or country (Judg 19:16). Deut 14:21 differentiates the resident alien from the “foreigner” (*nokri*), and the text explicitly distinguishes both the resident alien and the foreigner from Israelites. In this passage, it would appear as though non-Israelites can possess different statuses with respect to Israelite society, something that seems to be

reaffirmed in texts outside of the Deuteronomistic tradition as well (e.g., Exod 12:43–9). Perhaps the resident alien and the mere foreigner are distinguished from one another due to their perceived integration, or lack of integration, into Israelite society.

In one instance, the non-Israelite resident alien appears in a negative context. Deuteronomy 28, a listing of divine curses, warns Israel that one of the punishments for their violation of the covenant will be that “the resident alien, who is in your midst will rise above you higher and higher, but you will go down lower and lower...he will be the head and you will be the tail” (Deut 28:43–4). The passage suggests that the resident alien’s natural station is one of dependency, not equality or superiority, even though he is entitled to the justice owed to him as a resident alien. It has become common to suggest that the laws concerning the resident alien are “egalitarian.” This passage, combined with other passages which show that the resident alien is (and should, in the proper order of things, be) a dependent, like other lowly social groups such as widows and orphans, suggest otherwise.

Though the resident alien is typically a non-Israelite cast in a fairly positive light, the tradition disparages other non-Israelites in various ways. Some non-Israelites are portrayed negatively because of the alleged threat they pose to Israel’s religious life, while others are portrayed negatively because of an act they committed in the past. The indigenous peoples that the Israelites purportedly displace through conquest are seen to be particularly dangerous. These especially dangerous groups are sometimes identified specifically as seven discrete nations: the Hittites, the Girgashites, the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Perizzites, the Hivvites and the Jebusites (Deut 7:1; Josh 3:10; 24:11).³ Most commonly, Deuteronomistic texts list six nations, often omitting the Girgashites (Deut 20:17; Josh 9:1; 11:13; 12:8; Judg 3:5; 1 Kgs 9:20). There are other combinations and variations as well. The terminology used to describe these former inhabitants varies between three major expressions: “nations” (*gôyîm*), which is used most frequently,⁴ “peoples” (*‘ammîm*),⁵ and “inhabitants of the land” (*yôšbê hā’āreṣ*),⁶ suggesting that these three expressions are closely related.

At times, Deuteronomistic passages use the gentilics “Amorite” and “Canaanite” as catch-all terms for the peoples to be driven out and destroyed (Deut 1:27; Josh 24:18; Judg 11:23; 2 Sam 21:2; 2 Kgs 21:11). Other biblical texts also use “Amorite” to describe the indigenous inhabitants, such as Gen 15:16; 48:22; Amos 2:9–10. In the Deuteronomistic tradition, the term “Amorite” may not be exclusively reserved for the seven Canaanite groups to be driven out and destroyed by Israel. It is not entirely clear, but 1 Sam 7:14 may identify the “Amorites” with Philistines, even though Philistines are not typically mentioned as people to be driven from the land.

It is possible that the Deuteronomistic tradition employs the term “Amorites” often because of Neo-Assyrian influence on the tradition. In Neo-Assyrian texts dating from the first millennium BCE, “Amorite” refers to

people who lived in the western regions of Assyrian influence.⁷ The kingdoms of Syria, Phoenicia, Israel, Moab, Ammon, Edom and the Philistine city-states are considered part of the “land of the Amorites.” Similarly, “Hittite” seems to also serve as an expression for Syria-Palestine in Neo-Assyrian texts. Another use of “Amorite” in the Hebrew Bible distinguishes between the inhabitants of the highlands and those who dwelled in the sea-coast region, which was said to be populated by Canaanites (Deut 1:7, 19–20, 44; Josh 5:1; also Jdt 5:3). This, too, seems to mirror a Neo-Assyrian use of the term.⁸

Most of the negative caricatures of Amorites from Mesopotamian literature, which characterize them as uncouth people with barbaric religious practices, vastly antedate the Neo-Assyrian period.⁹ Consequently, it cannot be stated with certainty whether or not biblical authors had these negative Mesopotamian portrayals of Amorites in mind when they decided to label the former inhabitants of the land, “Amorites.” It does seem clear that, as John Van Seters argues, biblical texts use the terms “Amorite” and “Hittite” rhetorically and ideologically (for other ideological uses of “Amorite” and “Hittite,” see Ezek 16:3, 45). The terms “represent the primeval wicked nations whom God displaced in order to give Israel its land.” While Neo-Assyrian texts classified everyone in Syria-Palestine as “Amorites” or “Hittites,” the Deuteronomistic tradition—and other biblical traditions—vehemently distance Israel from those appellations. The distancing most likely serves predominantly to reinforce Israel’s non-indigenous origins to the area. On the other hand, it is still possible that the negativity attached to the word “Amorite” in earlier Mesopotamian literature played a role in how powerful the label “Amorite” might have been for biblical writers, when they negatively described the Canaanites.

Religion as a marker of foreignness

The most prominent and prevalent accusation levied against the former inhabitants of the land is that their religion poses a direct threat to Israel. These dangerous people venerated “other gods” and religious objects that Deuteronomistic ideology vociferously condemned. Deuteronomy 12:2, the very beginning of the “core” of Deuteronomy, says that these nations serve their gods in every high place and under every green tree. These nations also employ illegitimate altars, asherahs,¹⁰ standing stones (*maṣṣēbōt*) and engraved images (*pēsîlîm*)—things the text commands Israelites to cut down and destroy. These “other gods” (*’ēlōhîm ’aḥērîm*) are referred to as “gods of the peoples who surround you” or “their gods” (Deut 6:14; 7:4, 16; 12:2, 30), gods who were “not known” or who were “neither known by you or your ancestors” (Deut 13:2, 6; 32:17).

These gods are sometimes derogatorily referred to as “detestable things” (*šiqqûs*, root *šqs*) (Deut 29:16 [ET 29:17]; 1 Kgs 11:5, 7; 2 Kgs 23:13, 24). Interestingly, in three out of the five times that “detestable thing” appears in

the Deuteronomistic tradition, the term refers to national deities of nearby nations that are not among the seven “Canaanite” nations, such as Chemosh the national god of Moab, Milcom the god of the Ammonites and Astarte,¹¹ the patron goddess of the Sidonians (Lebanon). In these instances, the text disapprovingly refers to cults that Solomon set up, probably because he included the gods of conquered nations (2 Sam 8:12), or key allies such as the Phoenician city, Sidon,¹² in the Israelite pantheon, which was a common practice among states in ancient West Asia.

Deuteronomy 7:26 indicates that there is a relationship between the root “to detest” (*šqs*) and the famous biblical pejorative, “abomination” (*tô ‘ēbā*). The verse admonishes Israelites against bringing an illegitimate religious object, which is referred to as an abomination, into their home: “Do not bring an abomination (*tô ‘ēbā*) into your house that you, like it, should be consigned to the ban (*hērem*). You shall utterly despise it (*šaqqēs tēšaqqēšennū*) and utterly abominate it (*ta ‘ēb tēta ‘ābennū*), for it is consigned to the ban.” In Deut 7:26, both the root for the word, “abomination” (*t ‘b*) and the noun itself (*tô ‘ēbā*) seem to be closely related to the verb “to detest.” The ban (*hērem*), which will be discussed in more detail below, in this verse means to utterly destroy and eradicate something from the land of Israel.

It is not simply hated religious objects that are said to be abominations; people can be abominations as well. The Deuteronomistic tradition differs from other biblical strands, such as the Holiness tradition, which usually refers to *actions* as “abominations” (*tô ‘ēbā*). Deuteronomistic texts routinely call actions, objects, people (Deut 22:5) and animals (Deut 14:3; 17:1) “abominations.” Deut 18:12 says that “all who practice” (*kol ‘ōšēh*) sorcery, divination or necromancy are “an abomination to Yahweh, and on account of these abominations, Yahweh your god will drive them out (*môriš*) from your presence.” The verb “drive out” or “dispossess” (*yrš*) is commonly used to describe the fate of the groups that inhabit the land (18:14). However, individuals actually referred to as abominations are not explicitly consigned to the ban.

Another Deuteronomistic text identifies the much maligned “other gods” as none other than the “host of heaven”:

If within one of your towns, which Yahweh your God is about to give to you, a man or woman is found in your midst, who should do evil in the eyes of Yahweh your God, transgressing his covenant, serving other gods and worshipping them— i.e.,¹³ the sun or the moon or all the host of heaven, which I did not command...then you shall investigate it well... (Deut 17:2–4a, emphasis mine).

In other words, the gods condemned by the Deuteronomistic tradition are identified here as members of a typical Canaanite pantheon such as the Sun, the Moon and other members of the Supreme God’s retinue who are

emphatically disassociated with Israel and are said to be gods belonging to the surrounding nations (Deut 4:19).

The expression, “which I did not command” (*’āšer lō’ šiwwītī*) deserves a special look because when a text emphasizes that Yahweh most certainly did not command something, it is sometimes an indication that a significant number of people thought Yahweh did in fact command it. For example, Jer 7:31 insists that Yahweh absolutely did not command (*’āšer lō’ šiwwītī*) that child sacrifice be practiced among the Israelites (see also Jer 19:5; 32:35). However, other texts imply that at least some people did believe that Yahweh commanded child sacrifice and that it was perfectly compatible with the worship of Israel’s God. Ezekiel argues that, as a punishment for their transgressions, Yahweh gave Israel laws that were not good and by which they could not live, including child sacrifice¹⁴ (Ezek 20:25–26; compare 20:30–31; 23:38–39).¹⁵ And, of course, there is the famous example of Yahweh’s demand that Abraham sacrifice his son Isaac, which presupposes that sacrificing a child to Yahweh would be a reasonable and comprehensible request (Gen 22:1–14).¹⁶ Other examples, such as the sacrifice of Jephthah’s daughter to fulfill a vow, also suggest that child sacrifice was a Yahwistic practice, and not necessarily associated with “other gods” (Judges 11; compare Mic 6:6–8, though perhaps Micah’s example is hyperbolic).

The Deuteronomistic tradition, with Jeremiah and other biblical traditions,¹⁷ stresses that child sacrifice is something only practiced by the surrounding nations for their gods and that such a practice was not commanded by Yahweh. In fact, for the Deuteronomistic tradition, child sacrifice is an “abomination” (*tô’ēbā*) to Yahweh (Deut 18:9) and is listed among several “abominations” practiced by the indigenous people to be dispossessed, such as various ritual arts¹⁸ and necromancy (18:10–12). These abominable practices of the nations are contrasted with the “blameless” (*tāmîm*) state Israel is exhorted to pursue (18:13). The “nations” to be dispossessed and destroyed also heed (*yīšmā’û*) those who practice sorcery and divination, whereas Israelites must heed (*tišmā’ûn*) only prophets who are like Moses from “among your brethren” (*mē’ahēykā*) (18:15, 18).

The “holy man” and “holy woman” (*qādēš* and *qēdēšā*) are probably freelance religious specialists condemned by the Deuteronomistic tradition. 1 Kgs 14:24 asserts that the holy man (*qādēš*) was one of “the abominations of nations that Yahweh dispossessed before Israel.” Nevertheless, the presence of the holy man and holy woman persisted after the Israelites took possession of the land. Deuteronomy 23:18 [ET 23:17] forbids Israelite women and men from becoming a holy woman or holy man. Kings who receive good reviews by the Deuteronomistic tradition such as Asa, Jehoshaphat and Josiah are said to have expelled the “holy ones” (if one takes *qēdēšîm* as a plural encompassing men and women) from the land (1 Kgs 5:12; 22:46; 2 Kgs 23:7). The Deuteronomistic tradition casts freelance religious specialists like the holy people in a negative light, but

its tone is not too far removed from the suspicion of freelance religious practitioners in other ancient Near Eastern societies. Numerous texts from Mesopotamia show a disdain for sorcery, witchcraft and those independent specialists who practice them.¹⁹

Religious practitioners or prostitutes?

It is common to render “holy man” (*qādēš*) and “holy woman” (*qēdēšā*) as “cult prostitute,” or worse, for the masculine form, “sodomite” (AV, RSV). No English translation currently translates *qādēš* and *qēdēšā* as what they literally mean: “holy man” and “holy woman.” The “cult prostitute” translation continues despite the fact that cognate terminology from Akkadian and Ugaritic sources overwhelmingly undermines the idea that there was such an institution as “cult prostitution.” Confronted with the stark lack of evidence, some scholars assert that even if there is no evidence for the institution of cult prostitution, the biblical writers polemically insinuated that holy men and women were cult prostitutes as a way to delegitimize them.²⁰ If this is the case, the Deuteronomistic attacks on the holy man and holy woman would be an example of the biblical text distorting and maligning an allegedly foreign religious custom to disparage them and create a sense of disgust around them.

But this is probably not the case. Mesopotamian sources show that the holy woman (*qadištu*) was a wet nurse, who also performed rituals surrounding childbirth.²¹ As a largely independent woman who worked, often on the street,²² she might have been associated with sex workers or even, in some circles, have been considered part of the same lowly, marginalized class as sex workers.²³ But there is little evidence that she participated in sex work, let alone religious sex work. Consequently, biblical passages that appear to place the holy woman and “prostitute” in close proximity to one another need to be analyzed closely before asserting that the two terms are used in “parallelism.”²⁴

In Genesis 38, the patriarch Judah mistakes Tamar for a “prostitute” (*zônâ*), sleeps with her and promises to pay her the next day. Mistaking unattached women on the street for prostitutes seems to have happened not infrequently,²⁵ which may have led to an association between sex workers and the holy woman, both of whom appear to have sold their wares on the street. When Judah returns the following day, he asks people on the street whether they have seen the holy woman (*qēdēšā*). Because the narrative uses “holy woman” and “prostitute” in close proximity, some conclude that “holy woman” must be a synonym for “prostitute.” The problem with this interpretation is that Tamar’s sex work does not take place in a cultic setting. Judah initially finds Tamar

in the gate of the city (which could have been the location of a shrine,²⁶ though the text does not say) and also looks for her in the street. Holy women and female sex workers could have operated in the same milieu, but that does not mean that sex work was intrinsic to the profession of the holy man or holy woman.

Lastly, certain mourning rituals are alleged to be foreign to Israel. Deuteronomy 14:1–2 says that Israelites may not lacerate themselves or make a bald spot between the eyes for the dead because they are a “holy people” to Yahweh who has chosen them “to be a people for his own possession out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth” (14:2). This is another example of the Deuteronomistic tradition’s estrangement of rituals that are, by other accounts, normal Israelite practices. Descriptions of similar depilation practices among Israelites appear in other biblical texts. Amos 8:10 says that Israelites will make “baldness on every head” when Yahweh brings about famine and other natural disasters in judgment. Ezek 7:18 says that Judean survivors of the conquest and destruction will make “baldness on their heads,” an act similar to what Deut 14:1–2 condemns. Ezra tears out the hair of his head and beard when he realizes that Judeans are intermarrying with outsiders (Ezra 9:3).²⁷ Isaiah 22:12 has Yahweh actually command people to make baldness on their heads, again, in response to conquest and judgment. Jeremiah 16:5–6 describes laceration and depilation as typical Israelite mourning rites that will not be performed for the dead because the people are being punished (see also Jer 41:5).

Perhaps it could be argued that most of the mourning rituals described positively above are not specifically “for the dead” and so they differ substantially from the rites condemned in Deut 14:1–2. Prohibiting depilation and laceration only in the case of mourning for the dead would be a particularly idiosyncratic prohibition.²⁸ Perhaps, Deut 14:1–2 targets a cult for dead ancestors and these specific mourning rituals might have played a role in identification with or communion with the dead. On the other hand, the fact that Deut 14:1–2 does not prohibit sackcloth, ashes and crouching low on the ground—three other common mourning rites—makes that interpretation unlikely. It cannot be convincingly argued that only laceration and depilation are associated with a cult for the dead but sackcloth, ashes and “being low” are not. The fact that laceration is sometimes associated with worship at high places may partially explain why they are condemned. The prophets of “the Lord” (*ba‘al*) at Mount Carmel (whoever he is) lacerate themselves, perhaps in a gesture of petitionary mourning to get the deity’s attention (1 Kgs 18:28). But bald spots are never associated with worship at high places, and so this explanation is also limited. It seems as though the best explanation has been provided by Olyan who argues that lacerations and bald spots cannot be easily reversed, should it be necessary to move from mourning to rejoicing rituals quickly.²⁹

The icons and rituals associated with the religion of the surrounding nations, such as multiple shrines, “standing stones” (*maššēbōt*), asherahs, lacerations and the imposition of bald spots for the dead, and maybe even holy ones were most likely just as indigenous to Israel as child sacrifice and veneration of other gods in the Israelite pantheon. After condemning worship of the gods of the surrounding nations on “high mountains” and under “green trees” as well as their altars, the asherahs and graven images, Deut 12:4 says that “you shall not act thusly for Yahweh your God.” The expression “on the high mountains” and “under every green tree” is typical Deuteronomistic talk for worship that takes place outside the Temple in Jerusalem. The mountains and green trees seem to be common locations for “high places” (*bāmōt*), local shrines where Israel’s God, and perhaps other deities were worshipped outside of the central sanctuary in Jerusalem (2 Kgs 16:4; 17:10; also Jer 3:6, 13; Ezek 6:13). By associating all of these religious customs with the indigenous non-Israelites, the Deuteronomistic tradition seems to deny that Israel’s ancestors did these very acts or that they were ubiquitous in ancient Israel’s past.

In contrast to this picture, both archaeological and biblical evidence suggest that standing stones as objects of worship were common for the people of ancient Palestine, including Israel, and ironically may have even been an expression of the taboo on images in worship that Deuteronomistic texts promote elsewhere (Deut 4:12, 15–18; 5:8; 27:15).³⁰ In Gen 28:17–18, Jacob sets up a standing stone (*maššēbā*), and pours an oil libation over it, declaring that “this stone which I set up as a standing stone will be God’s house.” Jacob named the place where he set up his standing stone Bethel, which was one of two key sanctuaries for the Northern Kingdom of Israel and the subject of polemics in the Deuteronomistic tradition because it rivaled the southern kingdom’s Jerusalem sanctuary (1 Kgs 12:27–13:34; 2 Kgs 23:4, 15–17). In fact, if one were to just read the book of Kings in isolation, one might get the impression that the altar at Bethel was the rebellious king Jeroboam’s idea (1 Kgs 12:33) rather than a prestigious sanctuary associated with a major patriarchal figure. Some scholars have noted that the Deuteronomistic tradition downplays the patriarchal traditions in Genesis, choosing to speak mostly about “the ancestors” generally and avoiding the mention of Abraham, Jacob and Isaac.³¹ If these scholarly reconstructions are accurate, perhaps it is precisely because the ancestors acted in ways that the Deuteronomistic tradition wanted to cast as “foreign” that its authors would have de-emphasized these ideologically unhelpful traditions.

The Deuteronomistic tradition does seem to recognize that at least some religious customs it maligned were a part of Israel’s history and some passages even attempt to offer an explanation for them. The Deuteronomistic tradition concedes that worship outside of the Jerusalem Temple was an important and perhaps necessary aspect of Israelite worship in the past. First Kings 3:2 explains the earlier use of high places by claiming that the people sacrificed

on high places because the Temple at Jerusalem was not yet built. In addition, the Deuteronomistic tradition does not seem to have a problem with Samuel’s sacrifices at high places (1 Samuel 9). These particular verses do not comment on whether or not worship at high places is a foreign or indigenous practice; they only recognize, perhaps grudgingly, that the practice was a part of Israel’s history.

The decision to cast religious customs it did not like as “foreign” was not the only path the Deuteronomistic tradition could have taken to polemicize against these particular religious practices. The Deuteronomistic tradition recognizes that some religious practices were Israelite in origin, even while disapproving of them. Gideon’s ephod was said to be a “snare” for Gideon and his family and an object after which Israel “played like a *zōnā*.” But the text does not say that the ephod, which was created by Gideon himself, was foreign—even though it was made out of Midianite plunder (Judg 8:27). Though Judg 18:17 pairs the ephod with household gods (*těrāpîm*), graven images and cast-metal images, ephods do not appear as part of Deuteronomistic polemics against foreigners. In addition, the bronze serpent, *Nehuštan*, which received incense offerings, was destroyed by Hezekiah, though it was set up by Moses, according to the text (1 Kgs 18:4). Thus, the casting of certain religious practices as “foreign” was a deliberately chosen polemical tactic to disparage them.

Social customs

The emphasis on the abominable *social* practices of other nations is something that the Holiness tradition stresses, but there may be some attacks on the non-cultic social practices of the surrounding peoples/nations in Deuteronomistic texts as well. In addition to dangerous religious customs, the nations are also said to be generally wicked, possibly both in a religious sense and a social sense. Deut 9:4–5 accuses the indigenous nations of general “wickedness” (*riš’ā*). The same root (*rš’*) is used elsewhere in the Bible, and once in the Deuteronomistic tradition (Deut 25:2) to denote the guilty party in judicial settings (see also Prov 18:5). Another closely related word for “wickedness” (*reša’*), from the same root, is used in a variety of settings, both to describe religious infractions and social injustice, but mostly in reference to social injustice and crime.³² Proverbs 10:27 contrasts general “wickedness” (*reša’*) specifically with “fear of the Lord” (*yir’at yhwh*).

Circumcision

One important social custom used to distinguish foreigners and native Israelites is circumcision. But in the Deuteronomistic tradition, only the Philistines are marked specifically by their lack of circumcision. References to the Philistines in the tradition appear in older narratives appropriated by

Deuteronomistic authors, which describe Israel's conflict with the Philistines. In these stories, the text more than once refers to the Philistines as “the uncircumcised” (*hā'ārēlīm*; Judg 15:18; 1 Sam 14:6; 31:4; 2 Sam 1:20). For these narratives, preserved by the Deuteronomistic tradition, the Philistines' peculiar social custom (or rather, lack of it) has become a major identifying feature for them. The obsession with the Philistine tradition of not circumcising is especially clear in a story, preserved by the Deuteronomistic tradition,³³ in which Saul challenges David to bring him one hundred Philistine foreskins as a bride price for Saul's daughter Michal (1 Sam 18:20–29). Saul Olyan aptly characterizes this episode as an example of the “grotesque fetishizing” of Philistine foreskins.³⁴ In contrast, the Samuel narratives never refer to people such as the Amalekites as “the uncircumcised” (see, e.g., 1 Sam 15:1–20). Neither the conquest narratives of Joshua, nor the narratives in Judges highlight circumcision in their characterizations of Canaanites, nor is circumcision highlighted when other groups are mentioned, such as Sidonians. The absence of references to lack of circumcision among the Canaanites is unsurprising, since circumcision was a common practice in Syria and Palestine.³⁵ Apparently, the Philistines, as a people originally from the Aegean Sea or Cyprus, did not adopt the practice.

The Deuteronomistic tradition's presentation of the Canaanites differs slightly from Genesis 34, which portrays one of the major Canaanite groups, the Hivvites, as being uncircumcised. Conversely, the Deuteronomistic tradition nowhere claims that the Hivvites did not circumcise. If Genesis 34 preserves a historical memory of some kind, Hivvites could have been an exception to the seemingly normal practice of circumcision in Syria-Palestine and Egypt (Jer 9:25–6). Some scholars have argued that the biblical Hivvites are related to the Hurrians,³⁶ a Mesopotamian/northern Syrian group that formed the kingdom of Mittani, which was eventually overrun by the Hittites in the fourteenth century BCE. If this very problematic theory is true,³⁷ it is possible that the Hivvites/Hurrians, as a group of Indo-European language speakers who came from outside Palestine, did not practice circumcision like the majority of Syro-Palestinian groups. The use of the term *Kharu* to describe all of Canaan in some Egyptian texts³⁸ also suggests the possibility that Hurrians were a major group in Palestine. The Egyptian geographic use of *Kharu* might additionally show that, like “Amorite” and “Hittite,” the biblical material uses “Hivvite”/“Hurrian” in a stereotyped and ideological fashion. Another option is that the story of Shechem in Genesis 34 serves as an explanation, or etiology, for the practice of circumcision among the Hivvites. Othniel Margalith argues that the Hivvites are actually the Achaeans, known as *Akaiwaša* in Egyptian and *Ahijawa* in Hittite, a Peloponnesian sea-people, who invaded Palestine and who were said to have practiced circumcision.³⁹

An identification of the Hivvites with the Achaeans or Hurrians may be a stretch, but it is certainly possible that they were considered a group who originated from outside the Levant and who would not have practiced

circumcision. After all, the Gibeonites (identified as Hivvites in Josh 9:7) do claim to be from a “land very far away” (*mē’eres rēhōqā mē’ōd*) (Josh 9:9). The Gibeonites’ ruse might contain a kernel of truth—after all, the best cons do usually contain a little bit of truth.

Though the Deuteronomistic tradition only mentions the Philistines’ lack of circumcision, it regards circumcision as a necessary social custom for Israelites. According to Joshua, the descendants of those who had left Egypt had not been circumcised in the wilderness, and Yahweh had to command Joshua to have all the Israelites circumcised “a second time” (Josh 5:2). Because the narrative points out that the previous generation that left Egypt “did not heed the voice of Yahweh” (Josh 5:6), the narrative seems to imply that the failure to circumcise was a result of the disobedience of the previous generation.

The word “reproach” (*herpā*) seems to suggest that the foreskin is a socially shameful marker. In the Priestly worldview, circumcision is a sign of the covenant between Israel and Yahweh (Genesis 17). In Ezek 44:4–9 and Isa 52:1, lack of circumcision poses either a profaning or polluting threat to holiness.⁴⁰ Conversely, for the Deuteronomistic tradition, circumcision appears to be a divinely commanded social practice. The word “reproach” is used of acts or circumstances that bring about social disgrace, humiliation or embarrassment. Rachel’s inability to have children is a “reproach” for her, which God took away (Gen 30:23). Tamar implores Amnon to consider that she would not be able to make her reproach go away should he rape her (2 Sam 13:13). Widowhood is also thought to cause reproach (Isa 54:4). Physical mutilation can bring about “reproach” as well. When Nahash the Ammonite intimidates the city of Jabesh and agrees to make a covenant with them only on the condition that he gouge out one eye from each Jabeshite, he brags that his act “will make [the covenant] a reproach on all Israel” (1 Sam 11:2).

“Reproaches” are also associated with taunting and scorn. When David asks how the Israelites will deal with the menacing Philistine giant, Goliath, he says, “what will be done for the man who kills this Philistine and takes away the reproach (*herpā*) from Israel. For who is this uncircumcised Philistine that he should reproach (*hērēp*) the brigades of the living God?” (1 Sam 17:26⁴¹). This passage is particularly noteworthy because it portrays an uncircumcised person, whose uncircumcision would be considered a reproach according to Joshua 5, as the person bringing the reproach upon Israel. Judging from David’s comment, Goliath’s reproaching (*hērēp*) represents an unacceptable reversal of the way things are supposed to be. In another example of the association between scorn and reproach, Nabal’s men scorn David and his entourage, which was said to bring a reproach on David (1 Sam 25:14, 39).⁴² The word “reproach” is also used to describe the humiliation experienced after invasion, plunder, conquest and other forms of victimization, as a euphemism for shamefully exposed genitalia (Isa 47:3), and as a general synonym for disgrace and humiliation (Jer 31:19; 51:51; Isa 30:5; 54:4; Ps 69:7, 19; 71:13).

If "reproach" indicates acts or circumstances that bring about social disgrace, an accusation of uncircumcision is an accusation that people participate in a socially disgraceful, shameful behavior. To characterize the Philistines as "the uncircumcised" is to make a shameful social behavior the key identifying feature of them. Because of the negative connotations associated with uncircumcision and the use of the term "the uncircumcised" as an alternative appellation for "Philistines," it may not be too much of a stretch to call "the uncircumcised" a kind of Israelite ethnic slur. Like some contemporary, dehumanizing ethnic slurs, such as "wetback" and "curry muncher," "the uncircumcised" turns a stigmatized, marginalized social act—such as crossing the Rio Grande to emigrate to the US or working as a day laborer or eating a spice that some Westerners find strange—into an insulting epithet.

Dietary customs

Food is another social practice highlighted by the Deuteronomistic tradition to distinguish Israelites from foreigners. Deuteronomy 14:3 proscribes the consumption of any "abomination" (*tô 'ēbā*). The laws permit only ruminants with split hooves, sea creatures with fins and scales, and "clean" (*tēhōrā*) birds (a category that excludes carnivorous birds and scavengers) (14:6, 9–11). Reptiles (*šereš*) are absolutely excluded (14:19), as are all carcasses. There are a number of modern scholarly and theological explanations for why these food prohibitions are a part of biblical legal corpora (see also Leviticus 11). But the only explicit rationale for these dietary laws is that Israel is a "holy people to Yahweh," in contrast to the "resident alien" (*gēr*) and "foreigner" (*nokrî*) (Deut 14:21).

The avoidance of some of these animals can be partially explained by agricultural customs in Syria-Palestine. The lack of pork in the West Semitic world and overall biases against non-ruminants because of the costliness of maintaining them may have partially contributed to the ease with which biblical legislators made this list of forbidden foods. There is archaeological evidence that pork was not a major part of the diet of West Semitic cultures, at least in some periods, and neither the Bronze Age nor Iron Age strata in Palestine reveal use of pork at any cultic sites.⁴³ Furthermore, pigs are not listed as sacrificial animals in the Ugaritic texts and the only biblically "unclean" animal listed is the ass (*'r*), which seems to have been sacrificed very infrequently, in extraordinary circumstances.⁴⁴ The Punic Marseilles Tariff shows an absence of all the animals described as unclean in the biblical dietary laws. It also lists deer as a sacrificial animal, which is a clean animal according to biblical sources, but not a proper sacrificial animal (Deut 12:15, 22; 15:22).⁴⁵ The climate and terrain of the region also seems to have made pig raising (and the raising of other non-ruminants) difficult, but not entirely impossible.⁴⁶ Adding to the evidence that West Semitic cultures avoided pork, Hellenistic sources note that Phoenicians avoided pork.⁴⁷

There was a cultural bias against pork and other animals in the East Semitic world as well, though this cultural bias did not prevent the non-sacrificial consumption of pork. Mesopotamian texts call pork "impure," "not fit for the temple, devoid of sense...an abomination to the gods, an abhorrence [to the (personal) god and accursed by Shamash."⁴⁸ Eating pork in dreams is also considered a bad omen. Dogs and the "cave bird" (*išsur hurri*) were also labeled abominable to the gods and water is said to become impure when it comes into contact with these two animals.⁴⁹ Pigs, dogs and cave birds were the target of negative discourse in Mesopotamian texts, but as far as public consumption is concerned, they seem to have only been prohibited as sacrificial victims. Like serving McDonald's or Burger King at a formal dinner for distinguished guests, the presentation of these animals as sacrificial victims would have been very disrespectful to the gods.⁵⁰

It seems as though the best explanation for the biblical dietary laws is that they have personalized the cultic diet by extending the logic of the cultic sphere to the individual. Houston suggests that when food taboos follow cultic practice, it is a reflection of the influence of the sanctuary on society. He argues that "whenever the cultic norms of the official sanctuaries were influential enough, the dietary repertoire was confined to the 'clean'." Houston plausibly proposes that the cult could have had so much influence on the non-cultic diet because the gods were imagined to have the same tastes as humans and, in my view more important, because most people were poor and only had meat in a sacrificial context.⁵¹ But in ancient Israel's case, the Deuteronomistic tradition attached dietary avoidances and prohibitions to the idea that Israel is a holy people (Deut 14:21). It would seem as though the "holiness" required of offerings (Deut 12:26) has been transferred from the altar to the mouth of the Israelite, who, as part of a holy people, should only eat food acceptable for sacrifice. The only exceptions to this possible connection between the holiness of offerings and the cultic diet are wild game such as deer, antelope, gazelle and other members of the *cervidae* family, which are not sacrificial animals in biblical legislation. One interpretation that might account for the inclusion of these game animals among "clean" animals is that other West Semitic cultures may have seen deer as an acceptable sacrificial animal. I have already discussed the possible evidence from the Marseilles Tariff. In addition, deer antlers were found in a sacrificial context in archaeological finds at Mount Ebal.⁵² Even though biblical texts did not see wild game as sacrificial victims, their cleanness according to biblical legislation may originate in West Semitic sacrificial customs.

If dietary laws, by and large, reflect the sacrificial customs of West Semitic peoples, the Israelite food laws, like circumcision, turn common West Semitic customs into distinct cultural markers. Just as the Priestly Writer turns a common West Semitic social practice into a sign of the covenant between Israel and Yahweh (Genesis 17), the Deuteronomistic tradition turns the dietary customs of West Semitic peoples into a distinct marker of Israel as a

“holy people.” The similarities that the laws have to West Semitic sacrificial custom suggests, but does not prove, that the dietary laws were composed during the exile in Babylon. The contrast between the avoidance of pork and other foods in the West and the acceptance of pork, and other foods, for non-cultic consumption in the East would have made the contrast between Judahites and Babylonians starker. At the same time, the general cultural bias against pork and other animals such as dogs and cave birds in the East would have given the food laws some overall legitimacy and support the idea that Israelites are a “holy people,” who are uniquely “wise and discerning” (Deut 4:4–6). After all, the Israelite diet is restricted to foods only fit for the gods.

Mythic foreigners

The first use of the word “people” (*‘am*) in the Deuteronomistic corpus is Deut 1:28,⁵³ a reference to the “people” in the valley of Eshcol, who are said to be “bigger and taller” than the Israelites (*bēnē yiśrā’ēl*, v. 3) and among whom the Anakim (*bēnē ‘ānāqīm*) dwell (see also Deut 9:2). These people are identified as “Amorites,” and since this story takes place in the highlands, near Hebron, “Amorite” is probably a reference to the people of Eshcol’s geographic location as residents of the highlands (Deut 1:20), as opposed to the coast.⁵⁴ The reference to the Anakim, people known for their superhumanly large stature, and sometimes associated with the Rephaim (Deut 2:11), shows that some of the people of Canaan have been “mythologized.”⁵⁵ While the idea that the Anakim live among the “Amorites” of the Valley of Eshcol fits with the overall theme of Israel fighting enemies that are bigger and stronger than they are, it should also be noted that this is an instance in which foreigners are characterized by physical appearance. The Deuteronomistic tradition also describes Philistines as having odd physical characteristics. The famous Philistine champion, Goliath, whom David killed with a slingshot was said to be extraordinarily tall (1 Sam 17:4). But Goliath was not an exceptional case; it seems as though “freakish” size was a common Philistine trait (2 Sam 21:15–22). Another Philistine champion from Gath was said to both be tall and have six fingers on each hand and six toes on each foot (21:20). Unlike some of the Mesopotamian texts encountered, however, the biblical material does not claim that these people have animalistic physical features. Nevertheless, the description of the super-human, mythological physical characteristics of some of the people of Canaan places the Deuteronomistic characterization of foreigners within a tradition, which, like the *Curse of Akkad* and the *Cuthean Legend of Naram-Sin* from Mesopotamia, characterizes hostile foreign peoples as extremely different physically, and even monstrous. It appears as though only some Canaanites are portrayed as large in stature in the Deuteronomistic tradition, whereas for the eighth-century prophet, Amos, all Amorites are giants (Amos 2:9–10).⁵⁶

Hereditary punishment

Deuteronomy 23:4–7 (ET 23:3–6) prohibits the Ammonite and Moabite from entering the “congregation of Yahweh” (*qəḥal yhw*). The reason for their exclusion from the “congregation” is that they did not meet the Israelites with food and water in the desert as they were leaving Egypt and hired the prophet Balaam to curse the Israelites. The passage says that Yahweh disregarded Balaam’s curse and turned it into a blessing. As a result, not only are Ammonites and Moabites not allowed into the “congregation of Yahweh,” but Israel may not “seek their peace or prosperity” (23:7).

The portrayal of the Ammonites and Moabites in Deut 23:4–7 is an example of what I call “hereditary punishment.” “Hereditary punishment” takes place when the act of an ancestor or ancestors has a negative impact on future generations.⁵⁷ Unlike the typical passing down of iniquity from parents to children as in Exod 20:5 or Deut 5:9, “hereditary punishment” affects larger groups such as tribes, nations and clan groups. In this instance, the entire group is punished because in the past they acted as obstructions for Israel in the wilderness. The punishment of the Ammonites and Moabites bears a resemblance to the punishment of the Amalekites, who are to be destroyed for their own behavior towards Israel while they were coming out of Egypt (Deut 25:17–19; Sam 15:2–3). The behavior of all these groups is beyond the pale—unethical acts that demonstrate the absence of a basic “fear of God” (Deut 25:18).

The most important idea communicated in Deut 23:4–7 is that Ammonite and Moabite males are barred from the congregation of Yahweh and from any positive relationship with Israelites because of an act committed in the past. Much has been written about this passage. In particular, scholars are interested in what the “congregation” (*qāḥāl*) means or what, exactly, the verses proscribe.⁵⁸ But regardless of what the passage means, the relationship prescribed between Ammonites, Moabites and Israelites has punitive motivations, and is not related to fear that Ammonites and Moabites will cause Israelites to worship other gods or participate in forbidden religious customs. The religious customs of the Egyptians and the Edomites do not warrant their permanent exclusion from the “congregation,” nor are Israelites commanded to never seek their peace or prosperity. In fact, Israelites are enjoined to do the opposite; they must not “abominate” (*tēta’ēb*) Edomites or Egyptians (23:8 [ET 23:7]) and they may be included in the assembly in the third generation.

The use of “to abominate” to describe what Israelites may not do to Egyptians and Edomites intimates that Israelites *should* abominate Ammonites and Moabites. In addition, the use of the verb “to abominate” (*t’b*) suggests a kind of totalizing, cutting-off of the Ammonites and Moabites from Israelite social life. Deuteronomy 7:26 employs the same verb in reference to the Israelites’ disposition towards “abominations” such as forbidden religious objects, which are to be consigned to the “ban.” Ammonites and Moabites are certainly

not consigned to total destruction here, or elsewhere in the Deuteronomistic tradition. On the contrary, Israelites must not touch the land of Ammon and Moab because Yahweh himself has promised it to the Ammonites and Moabites (Deut 2:19, 37; see also Gen 19:30–38). The particular animosity that Israelites are commanded to show towards the Ammonites and Moabites suggests that there are nuances to the meaning of “abominate.” To “abominate” something does not necessarily mean to act to destroy it.

Foreigners as a threat

When it comes to portraying threats that foreigners pose to Israel, the Deuteronomistic tradition is certainly very forceful about presenting certain groups (i.e., the Canaanites) as extremely menacing to Israel’s loyalty to Yahweh. Deut 7:1–6 portrays the seven Canaanite nations as so menacing that the Israelites must consign them all to the “ban.” They may not make a covenant with them, nor may they show them any favor. Israelites are forbidden to intermarry with them because the sons and daughters of the nations will turn Israelite children from following Yahweh to serve other gods. Instead, Israel is commanded to destroy their religious icons and utterly annihilate them. Deuteronomy 20:17–18 demands that Israelites consign the Canaanite nations (only six are listed here; the Girgashites are absent) to the ban so that they “will not teach you to act according to all their abominations, which they perform for their gods and that you might sin against Yahweh your God.” It is clear that this passage presents the Canaanites as particularly threatening because the text singles them out for utter annihilation in contradistinction to other groups. When it comes to cities that are “very far from you, not from the cities nearby,” the Israelites may offer terms of peace and put the city under corvée labor (Deut 20:10–11). Conversely, for the cities of the “peoples” that “Yahweh your God gave you as an inheritance, you shall not keep alive anything that breathes” (Deut 20:16). Joshua 23:12 says that Israelites should not intermarry or have any kind of social intercourse (denoted by the expression *bô’ bē-*) with these “nations.”

Most often, Canaanites or their customs are referred to as a “snare” or “bait” (*môqēš*) for Israel. The term is also used for a religious object (Gideon’s ephod—Judg 8:27) and the gold plating of forbidden religious icons, which could “ensnare” Israel (Deut 7:25—here the verbal form, *yqš*). In Deut 7:16–26, to show pity for the “peoples” that Yahweh delivered to the Israelites and serving their gods would be a snare (see also Exod 34:10–16; Num 33:55). Josh 23:13 calls the nations that Yahweh promises to drive out before Israel “snares.” According to Judg 2:2–3, the gods of the “inhabitants of the land” will be a snare. Other expressions for the trouble that these nations will cause Israel include: a trap (*paḥ*), a whip (*šōṭēl*) and thorns in the eyes (*šēnînîm bē’ēnēkem*, Josh 23:13, cf. Num 33:55).

Two of the metaphors used to describe the Canaanites are “prickly things” that sting, and the use of “prickly things” in biblical metaphors is

quite common. Whips, thorns and other prickly things (like scorpions) are associated with domination (Judg 8:7, 16; 1 Kgs 12:11, 14). Prickly things are also associated with entrapment (Prov 22:5) and immobility (Hos 2:6; Prov 15:19). Wicked people are metaphorically compared to briars (*hēdeq*) and thorn hedges (*mšûkâ*) in Micah 7:4. Words of scorn and derision are like “thistles” (*sārābîm*), “briers” (*sillônîm*), “scorpions” (*‘aqrabîm*), a “prickling brier” (*sillôn mam ‘îr*), and a “painful thorn” (*qôš mak ‘îb*) (Ezek 2:6; 28:24). Though there is an expression in English, “a thorn in one’s side,” which usually refers to an annoyance or a persistent problem, the use of thorns in the biblical material seems to more strongly communicate entrapment, immobility, oppression and, of course, the pain that accompanies those situations. Eyes (*‘ênayim*) in the Hebrew Bible often denote perception and judgment, so perhaps the expression “thorn in the eyes” communicates a lack of judgment, or a state in which everyone does “what is right in his own eyes” (Deut 12:8; Judg 17:6; 21:25). Just as bribes “blind” the eyes (i.e., the judgment) of the wise (Deut 16:19), the Canaanites will hinder, or perhaps even paralyze, the judgment of Israelites.

“Traps” and “snares,” other objects to which the Canaanites are compared also communicate immobility. Traps are hidden (Ps 140:5; 142:3; Jer 18:22), birds are unaware of them (Prov 7:23), and a bird can fall into one (Amos 3:5). Traps may even spring from the ground (Amos 3:5). Judging from the metaphorical uses of “traps” and “snares” elsewhere, it could be that traps communicate that Canaanites and their practices are insidious, hidden threats, which are not readily perceived. It would be better to just avoid them altogether than risk being caught, unawares, by their devices.

Some argue that the portrayal of the Canaanites in the Deuteronomistic tradition serves a primarily ideological and rhetorical function. The harsh treatment of the Canaanites is a way to legitimate King Josiah’s (640–609 BCE) religious program to centralize all worship in Jerusalem and to justify the suppression of those who resisted (e.g., Deut 13:6–18).⁵⁹ Some even suppose that the Canaanites are largely mythological peoples, “either bygone or fictitious and not contemporary neighbors.”⁶⁰ Kaminsky suggests that texts referring to the Canaanites “were designed to propagate a newly unified sense of identity during a politically insecure period and are thus addressed to members of the Israelite community, whose dissent could threaten a fragile order.”⁶¹

There are certainly some mythological elements wrapped up in the presentation of the Canaanites, but there may be some historical truth to the stories about the brutality shown towards them. The references to the Anakim and Rephaim as well as the idealized conquest traditions (Joshua 1–12) undoubtedly present the Canaanites in stylized and mythological terms. On the other hand, in the layer of the Deuteronomistic tradition composed before the Babylonian Exile, the stories about the Canaanites would serve as historic memory that would justify the expansionist ambitions of Josiah, who

probably made real military incursions into the territory of the defunct northern kingdom of Israel (2 Kgs 23:15–20). Furthermore, if Jeffrey Geoghegan is correct, and the expression “until this day” suggests that a text probably dates from the pre-exilic period of composition,⁶² then the Canaanites—or people who had the label “Canaanite” imposed on them—may not just have been a fictional creation. Rather, the passages suggesting that Canaanite groups were living among the Israelites “to this day” should be taken at face value: there were, in fact, people identified as “Canaanites” who were contemporaneous with the pre-exilic authors of the Deuteronomistic tradition. Whoever these supposed Canaanites might have been, because of the ahistorical nature of the conquest of Canaan, references to them in the text should be taken seriously, not historically. The conquest of Canaan constitutes a major part of ancient Israel’s collective memory, which was preserved in part by the Deuteronomistic tradition. The conquest may be ahistorical, but it was a very real memory for these writers. Since the perception of ancestry need not map onto historical events, and kinship can also certainly be fictive, the supposed Canaanites who existed “until this day” need not have descended from the Canaanites in an historical sense. If kinship can be fictive, the Deuteronomistic tradition could have afforded these supposed Canaanites a fictive ancestry based on the equally fictitious conquest of Canaan.

It is well known that the picture of Israel’s conquest and displacement of the indigenous peoples of Canaan seems contradictory in Joshua and Judges. Joshua 1–12 presents the conquest of Canaan as largely successful and complete, but Chapter 13 and following, as well as the book of Judges, present the conquest of Canaan as incomplete.⁶³ Joshua 13 and following chapters claim that there are a number of Canaanites and other foreigners, such as Philistines and Sidonians, living in the land promised to Israel. There are fascinating historiographic and textual questions surrounding these variant pictures, but what is most important is that texts suggest that there were actually people identified as “Canaanites” living in the pre-exilic period. Joshua 13:13 mentions the Geshurites and Maachites, who were not dispossessed by Israel, but “live in the midst of Israel *until this day*.” The Jebusites, the former inhabitants of Jerusalem, are also said to still live among Israel “until this day” (Josh 15:63; Judg 1:21). Lastly, the descendants of Rahab, who helped Joshua and Caleb and were spared the fate of Jericho, are said to live among Israel “until this day” (Josh 6:25).

If there were, in fact, “Canaanites” who still existed when the earliest layer of the Deuteronomistic tradition developed—or people who were given a fictive Canaanite ancestry—one need not wonder how they were treated. Joshua 16:10 and 1 Kgs 9:21 claim that descendants of the Canaanites, who were not destroyed, were conscripted as corvée labor “until this day” (also Judg 1:27–36).⁶⁴ The Gibeonites are also said to be under a curse of eternal servitude because of which they will “never cease being slaves: hewers of wood and drawers of water” for the “whole congregation” the “house

of my God” and the “altar of Yahweh in the place he will choose” (Josh 9:23, 27). The text claims that the Gibeonites continue to be slaves “until this day.” The “until this day” formula seems to suggest that there was a class of forced laborers identified as “Canaanites” that lived in Israel when the pre-exilic edition of the Deuteronomistic tradition developed. The references to Canaanites as part of a *corvée* labor force possibly show that people identified as Canaanites were socially marginalized, considered outside of the Israelite community, and that their marginalization and forced labor or enslavement was based on their identification as members of an ethnic group.

As noted, Rahab’s descendants also live in the midst of Israel “until this day,” but it is important to note that in Josh 6:23, before the Israelites incinerate Jericho and all its inhabitants, Rahab’s family is saved but placed outside of the Israelite camp (*miḥûṣ lēmaḥānēh yiśrā’ēl*). The segregation of Rahab’s family underscores the fact that her Canaanite family may live among Israel, but they do not belong to Israel, nor are they identified as Israelites. Additionally, considering that other Deuteronomistic texts want to keep impure things outside of the war camp (Deut 23:10–15 [ET 23:9–14]), Rahab’s placement outside of the camp could suggest that Canaanites defile the camp in some way. Does Josh 6:23, by extension, suggest that Canaanites, as a people, were considered to be ritually defiling in some way by the Deuteronomistic tradition? It is possible, but the evidence is nevertheless too scanty to support that conclusion definitively. Certainly, however, Josh 6:23–5 shows that a people can be thought of as being very separate from Israelites but nevertheless living “in the midst” of Israel.

The book of Samuel claims that Canaanites lived urban enclaves during the period of the united monarchy of David and Solomon. “Cities of the Hivvites and Canaanites” were included in the census conducted by Joab (2 Sam 24:6). One of the portrayals of Canaanites in Samuel also insinuates that some of the Canaanites who lived in the land Israel may have been able to exert some power. Second Samuel 21:1–9 recounts a story in which David hands over seven of Saul’s male relatives to be killed by the Gibeonites in order to avenge Saul’s earlier massacre of the Gibeonites. The story claims that the bloodguilt from the massacre had caused a three-year famine in Israel (21:1), and David goes to the Gibeonites to see how he might deal with the lingering bloodguilt. It is possible that this story was concocted by an apologist for David, who wanted to explain away the rather convenient demise of almost all of Saul’s descendants.⁶⁵ Whatever the circumstances of the story’s composition, it emphatically mentions that the Israelites made a covenant with the Gibeonites, who are “not of the Israelites, but rather⁶⁶ of the remnant of the Amorites” (21:2). The covenant the Israelites made with the Gibeonites mentioned in 2 Samuel 21 is probably the same covenant mentioned Joshua 9. Saul broke this covenant with the Gibeonites when he “sought to kill them in his zeal on behalf of the Israelites and Judahites.”

While the famine of 21:1 may influence David’s willingness to entertain the Gibeonites’ demands, David does allow them to decide what they want from Israel as compensation (21:3). The empowerment David grants to the Gibeonites to bless Israel and set the terms for the expiation of the bloodguilt appears to differentiate this pericope from Joshua 9’s portrait of the Gibeonites as a subservient people. It also suggests, if there is any truth to the narrative, that Israelite and Judahite regimes had to negotiate and play politics with so-called Canaanites. Here, David’s politics seem to provide a convenient excuse for the elimination of Saul’s descendants.

Both Joshua 9 and 2 Samuel 21 suggest Gibeonites become Yahweh worshippers. In Joshua 9, the Gibeonites are cursed to be servants both for the congregation and for the Temple, which would, of course be built later—a mention that probably places Joshua 9 in the pre-exilic period. It is difficult to imagine that people who did not worship Yahweh could serve the Temple of Yahweh in any capacity, no matter how lowly the job.⁶⁷ In 2 Samuel, the Gibeonites tell David that they will hang Saul’s relatives “before Yahweh in Gibeah of Saul, the chosen one of Yahweh.”⁶⁸ Executing people before Yahweh seems to have an expiatory effect (Num 25:4) and may remove the wrath of Yahweh, and so it would appear as though the Gibeonites do recognize Yahweh as their own deity.

The fact that the remaining so-called Canaanites are said to serve as *corvée* labor and slaves is another interesting similarity that the Deuteronomistic tradition shares with Genesis 9–10, which says that Canaan will be an *object* servant to Shem (*‘ebed ‘ābādīm*, 9:25), an eponymous ancestor of Israel. While *corvée* labor should not be conflated with slavery, 1 Kgs 9:21 uses the root *‘bd* (“to serve as a slave,” “to serve”) and *mas* (*corvée* labor) in close proximity (*lēmas ‘ōbēd*). If the “until this day” formula is truly an indication that texts were composed in the pre-exilic period, it indicates that could have been an influential tradition within Israelite history, shared by multiple sources, that justified the conquest, social marginalization and forced labor or enslavement of putative Canaanites, who were contemporaneous with the pre-exilic authors of the Deuteronomistic tradition.

In a couple of instances, monuments that stand “until this day” memorialize the wholesale slaughter of Canaanites. Ai, which was, according to the narrative, totally destroyed and cleansed of its inhabitants, is a “mound of eternal destruction until this day” (Josh 8:28; see also Josh 10:27).⁶⁹ The Ai mound (*tēl*) shows a relationship between the construction of the conquest narratives in Joshua and Deuteronomy’s law of the ban in 20:10.⁷⁰ Ai’s mound also shows that the ban, which in the context of war means the complete destruction of a people in a particular locale, was seen as a legitimate practice during a time in which a real, living monarch (Josiah) had the power to execute it. Thanks to the Mesha Stele (mid-ninth century BCE),⁷¹ it is well known that the ban was seen by Levantine peoples as a tactic of war and as some kind of

act for the national deity—in Mesha’s case, the Moabite God, Chemosh. Like Neo-Assyrian inscriptions and the depictions of the Canaanite conquest in the Bible, we cannot be totally sure of its historicity.

In stark contrast to the view that the former inhabitants of the land are dangerous threats found in Deuteronomy, Joshua and Judges, the books of Samuel and Kings represent them as marginalized *and* unsafe. Considering the actions of Saul and the legitimization of the ban (*hērem*) in the pre-exilic stratum of the Deuteronomistic tradition, is it possible that in the pre-exilic period, those who were labeled Canaanites were vulnerable to “zealous” outbursts from Judahite and Israelite kings? It is possible, but there is no record—biblical or otherwise—of a king after the United Monarchy massacring Canaanites. On the other hand, the fact that the book of Kings seems to compare Josiah to Joshua, the Israelite conqueror, par excellence, on a number of occasions as well as the legitimization of the ban in the Deuteronomistic tradition shows that such zealous outbursts like this might have been considered acceptable practice. If there were putative Canaanites living in the land of Judah when the first edition of the Deuteronomistic was being composed, a distinct possibility based on the “until this day” expression and other subtle clues in the text, their position was very precarious.

Non-peoples

The last kind of threatening foreigner to consider is the nation from afar that Yahweh will raise up to punish Israel. The image of this nation is similar to Mesopotamian portrayals of the Gutians and other peoples that the gods raise up to punish arrogant kings.⁷² Deuteronomy 28:49–52 says that Yahweh will raise up “a nation from afar, from the end of the earth, as the eagle swoops down, a nation whose language you will not comprehend.” This nation is described as “brazen-faced” (*ʾaz pānîm*) because it will show no favor to the old or the young. The expression “brazen-faced” appears to be a negative term, and not a description of the nation’s strength. The expression appears only one other time in the Hebrew Bible, in the very late text of Dan 8:23, which describes a ruler who is both “brazen-faced and skilled in double-dealing.” Much like the faraway nation in Deut 28:49–52, Dan 8:26 describes a mighty ruler who will “destroy extraordinarily.” The characterization of the anonymous “brazen-faced nation” and their disregard for the old and the young recalls descriptions of the Gutians as “people who know no inhibitions” and “show no restraint.”

Similarly, Yahweh promises to raise up a nation against Israel in Deut 32:21. This nation is described as a “non-people, a foolish nation:”

They have made me jealous with a “non-god”; they have vexed me with their meaningless things, so I myself will make them jealous with a “non-people;” with a foolish nation, I will vex them.

The expression “non-people” (*bēlo’-‘am*) recalls the description of the Gutians in the *Curse of Akkad*, which also describes them as a people “not classed among people.”⁷³ The *Curse* as well as the *Weidner Chronicle* draw attention to Gutians’ inferior mental faculties and their “barbarism,” just as Deut 32:21 calls this nation a “foolish nation” (*gōy nābāl*). Foolishness is the opposite of “wisdom” and knowledge of God (Proverbs 10). Fools “act corruptly” (*hišhîû*) “act abominably” (*hit’ibû*) and are “doers of wickedness” (*pō’ālê ’āwen*) (Ps 14:1, 4; 53:1). Because this mysterious group is described as a nation but *not* a people, the description at first glance seems to suggest that there is some subtle difference between the words “nation” and “people.” How can these foreigners constitute a nation, but not a people? I also argued earlier that “people” and “nation” seem practically interchangeable, and if there is some subtle distinction between them, it is hard to detect. This passage does not clarify the ambiguity. I would suggest that the use of “not a people” does not make a distinction between “nation” and “people,” as such, but is quite literally a dehumanizing statement. Like the Gutians, this nation is *not* a people, even though they may seem to be. Also, like the *Curse of Akkad*, the dehumanizing expression works in conjunction with the negative depiction of this nation’s cognitive faculties—they are a foolish nation.

If Deuteronomy 28 and 32 are pre-exilic, they may tap into an ancient tradition, found also in Mesopotamia, which proposed that the gods could raise up barbaric, uncouth nations against rulers who angered them. The nation mentioned both in Deuteronomy 28 and in the Song of Moses is anonymous, which adds to its mythical character. In Deut 32:21, it is unclear whether the nation comes from a faraway place or not, unlike the nation in Deut 28:49–52. It is only by juxtaposing both chapters’ descriptions of the nation that will judge Israel that an image of a faraway, barbaric nation that is an instrument of punishment emerges. If these chapters date to the exile or post-exilic period, they cast the Babylonians in this longstanding mythic narrative. The characterization of Babylon as “foolish” would certainly fit with other polemics against them as “brutish” (*bā’ar*) and “stupid” (*kāsal*) (Jer 10:8, see Chapter Seven).

Deuteronomistic ethnocentrism

The negative depictions of foreigners in the Deuteronomistic tradition operates within an overall assumption that Israel is elect and has a special relationship with Yahweh. Deuteronomy 10:15 claims that Yahweh loved and chose Israel’s ancestors and their descendants alone out of all the peoples. Deuteronomy 4, which is part of the exilic frame of Deuteronomy, explains the benefits of Israel’s unique relationship with its God:

So keep and do [Yahweh’s statutes and judgments] for that is your wisdom and your discernment in the sight of the peoples who will

hear all these statutes and say, “Surely this great nation is a wise and discerning people.” For what great nation exists, who⁷⁴ has a God so near to it as Yahweh our God whenever we call out to him? Or what great nation exists, who has statutes and judgments as righteous as this teaching, which I myself am establishing before you today?... Indeed, ask from the former days which were before you, since the day that God created human beings on the earth, and from one end of heaven to the other, “Has anything been done like this great thing, or has anything been heard like it? Has a people heard the voice of a God speaking from the midst of fire as you yourselves have heard and lived? Or has a God tried to go to take for himself a nation from the midst of a nation with trials, signs and wonders, and in battle and with a mighty hand and with an outstretched arm and with great terrors like all that Yahweh your God did for you in Egypt in your sight?”...Because [Yahweh]⁷⁵ loved your ancestors, thus he chose their descendants after them. And he willfully brought you, through his great might, from Egypt, driving out from before you nations greater and stronger than you to bring you in and give you their land as an inheritance, as it is today (Deut 4:6–8, 32–4, 37–8).

According to Deuteronomy 4, Israel has a unique, unparalleled relationship with its God. Israel’s God is nearer than any other god, and Israel has had privileged access to the fiery manifestations of Yahweh and has benefitted from his saving acts on its behalf. Most importantly, Israel has been chosen (*bāḥar*) and loved (*’āhab*) by Yahweh. As a result of this unique relationship, the Israelites also possess the most righteous (*ṣaddiq*) statutes and judgments out of all the nations. Access to this knowledge gives Israel the potential to become the most “wise and discerning” people on earth.

Wisdom and discernment, a result of its unique relationship with Yahweh, become Israel’s claim to greatness and are the source of its ethnocentrism. I am not convinced, as some commentators are, that Deuteronomy’s exilic frame (Deut 4:1–40 and Deuteronomy 32) promotes “monotheism” instead of a very strong monolatry and a forceful insistence that Yahweh is God—as in the Supreme God—as opposed to another national deity, such as the Babylonian god, Marduk or the Assyrian god, Aššur.⁷⁶ Leaving the question of monotheism aside, I think most can agree that Yahweh is certainly promoted as the Supreme God and it is Israel, not any other nation or people, that has access to him.

The wisdom that Yahweh imparts to his people is the ability to tell right from wrong in a judicial setting and an understanding of proper and improper social behavior.⁷⁷ The laws given by Yahweh are the most “righteous” (*ṣaddiq*), a term which is linked with judicial and court settings.⁷⁸ Weinfeld suggests that the wisdom promoted by the Deuteronomistic tradition actually eschews esoteric knowledge of creation and promotes proper moral

behavior (Deut 30:11–14). Similar wisdom literature appears in Babylon and Egypt and it probably influenced the particular style of wisdom found in the Deuteronomistic tradition.⁷⁹

The Deuteronomistic concept of wisdom centers around the “fear of Yahweh.” According to non-Deuteronomistic sources, the fear of Yahweh is the very beginning of wisdom (Psa 111:10; Prov 1:7; 9:10). The Deuteronomistic tradition directly connects fear of Yahweh with teaching the statutes and judgments of Yahweh to future generations and study of the law (Deut 4:10; 6:2; 17:19; 31:12), obeying the covenant and loyalty to Yahweh (6:24; 10:12; 13:4; 28:58; Josh 24:14; 1 Sam 12:14, 24; 2 Kgs 17:25, 28, 34, 36, 39). The consequences of fear of Yahweh are material and concrete. It will lead to a long lifespan (Deut 6:2), good things and life (Deut 6:24), good rulers (1 Sam 12:14) and deliverance from enemies (2 Kgs 17:39). In the Deuteronomistic tradition, the “fear of God” (*’ēlōhîm*) seems slightly different from “fear of Yahweh.” The expression “fear of God” seems to connote ethical principles that everyone, regardless of who they worship, should know. The Amalekites were said to have “no fear of God” when they attacked Israel from the rear when they were vulnerable. In other words, they went beyond the expectation of normal, ethical behavior that was expected of all people. The just king is also said to rule in the “fear of God” (2 Sam 23:3).

Deuteronomy 7:6, 12 say that Israel’s relationship with Yahweh is not a result of its size, but because of Yahweh’s love for Israel and his oath to Israel’s ancestors. This is often taken to mean that Israel was not selected because of its own “merit” or its “special worthiness.”⁸⁰ However, in many biblical passages, Yahweh’s response to the actions of ancestors is a statement of value. Yahweh’s treatment of a progenitor’s descendants often demarcates “good” and “bad” people along genealogical lines. I have already discussed the concept of hereditary punishment in the case of Ammon, Moab and Amalek. Deuteronomy 7:6, 12 by contrast, present an example of hereditary *blessing*. In other sources, when eponymous ancestors act in ways that are pleasing to Yahweh, their entire progeny benefits as a result. Abraham’s descendants are considered a great “reward” (*šākār*) for him (Gen 15:1). The Aaronids are given the priesthood as a reward for the bloody, zealous actions of their ancestor, Phineas (Num 25:11–13). David’s descendants are spared total loss of the throne for years because of Yahweh’s promise to David and David’s merit (2 Samuel 7; 1 Kgs 11:34–6; 15:4–5). Since Deut 7:6 does not mention Abraham, Isaac, Jacob or any of the other ancestors in the patriarchal narratives, for the Deuteronomistic tradition, Yahweh’s relationship with the ancestors may start in Egypt (7:8). Whatever ancestors Deut 7:6 has in mind, when the importance of hereditary punishment and hereditary blessing is taken into account, the promise to the ancestors probably communicates a value judgment on the “seed” (*zera*) of Israel (see also Deut 10:15).

Center and periphery

Similarities to the prevalent Mesopotamian center/periphery schema appear to be present in Deuteronomistic depictions of foreigners. Deuteronomy creates a vision of an idyllic, bountiful land that requires the protection of Yahweh from outside enemies. Deuteronomy 32:10–14 contrasts the wilderness in which Yahweh found Israel with the plentiful highlands inherited by Israel.⁸¹ Yahweh found Israel in “a howling chaos, a wasteland” (*bētōhû yēlēl yēšmōn*), which is both a contrast with the bountiful land they inherited and similar to the consequences Israel will experience as a result of breaking the covenant. Thanks to Yahweh’s protection and provision, Israel not only has plenty, it has the best. Israel has the “choicest lambs” (*hēleb kārîm*) and the best kernels of wheat (*hēleb kilyôt hittâ*). Yahweh also protects Israel within this bountiful land like an eagle protecting his young. The idyllic setting that Israel inherits also seems to be communicated by the idea that Israelites live in their bountiful land “securely” (*betah*) from their enemies due to Yahweh’s protection (Deut 12:10; 33:13–16 [in reference to specific ancestors, who, presumably stand in for tribes], 26–9; also Lev 25:18–19; 26:5). Like the Song of Moses, the Blessing of Moses notes that Yahweh gave “Joseph” the best things (*meqed*) of heaven, the best of the yield of the sun, the best things from the produce of the months, the best of the ancient mountains, the eternal hills and the earth in its fullness (verses 12–16). Later, the Blessing of Moses says:

There is none like the God of Jeshurun, who rides the heavens to your help and through the skies in his majesty. The ancient God is a habitation, and from under his everlasting arms he has driven out the enemy before you and said, “Destroy!”

Blessed are you, O Israel. Who is like you, a people saved by Yahweh, who is the buckler of your help and the sword of your majesty? And your enemies will fail with respect to you and you will tread on their high places (Deut 33:27, 29).

The Blessing of Moses and the Song of Moses assert that Yahweh has already driven out Israel’s enemies. But should future enemies arise, Yahweh will protect Israel as an eagle (32:11), a storm god,⁸² a buckler and a sword.

Certain resonances with the Mesopotamian center/periphery schema appear in these texts, but the dominant threat to Israel remains the “enemy within,” agents inside the land who will cause Israel to break the covenant (Deut 7:1–6; 28–9; 32). Even the reference to a “a non-people,” a description very similar to the description of the Gutians in the *Curse of Akkad*, is fitted to the text’s concern with obedience to the covenant. The Deuteronomistic vision combines its main concern with covenant violators within with its portrayal of hostile nations from the periphery. The dual vision may be communicated, in

part, by the very metaphors for the Canaanites, such as “thorns,” “traps” and “snares.” Thorns are often associated with the wilderness, are contrasted with settled life and, as a symbol for a reversal of the fertility of the land, are used in descriptions of Yahweh’s judgment (Judg 8:7; Isa 7:24; 32:13; 34:13). Traps are also used to capture wild, not domesticated, animals. In other words, perhaps, Canaanites and their practices have the ability to bring the wilderness into Israel both literally, in the form of Yahweh’s judgment, and figuratively.

In Mesopotamian examples, it is the presumptuous king who brings the wrath of the deity to his land through very public acts of impiety and defiance towards the gods. In the Deuteronomistic tradition, other agents within society can also incur Yahweh’s wrath, such as individual towns and people. At the same time, the book of Kings recognizes the monarch as the primary agent. By noting that it is the king who does evil in Yahweh’s eyes and provokes his wrath, the book of Kings, in contrast to the book of Deuteronomy, which emphasizes the role of the people, stands closer to Mesopotamian models. Interestingly, in the book of Kings, the monarch seems to act as a causative agent, and as someone who provokes the people of Israel to sin. Manasseh, who is considered the worst Judahite king, “who did more evil than all the Amorites did who were before him,” “seduced” (*yat’ēm*) the people “to do more evil than the nations that Yahweh destroyed before the Israelites” and he also “caused Judah to sin with his religious icons” (2 Kgs 21:9, 11).

The Deuteronomistic tradition, by putting so much emphasis on Israelites’ own culpability in bringing about their misfortunes, may also be expressing a variation on a West Semitic way of understanding history. Most of the states in Syria-Palestine were relatively small and their fortunes probably more uncertain than the larger world powers such as Assyria, Babylon and Egypt. It would seem as though states in Syria-Palestine, being between major two spheres of power (Mesopotamia and Egypt) would need to have a very compelling way of explaining national misfortune, since it probably happened frequently. They may have found their compelling explanations by blaming their own very angry national deities. In his stele, Mesha, king of Moab says that Israel oppressed Moab because “Chemosh was angry with his land” (*ky y’np kmš b’ršh*). The Mesha Stele does not say why Moab’s national god, Chemosh, was angry with his land, and the possible reasons are endless. Did Mesha’s father do something to anger Chemosh? Did the people of Moab anger their god somehow? Was Moab as dedicated to their national god as Israel, and did they show disloyalty to him in some way? Most of the time, extra-biblical texts are used to interpret the Bible. Perhaps, in the case of the Mesha Stele, it might be appropriate to use biblical evidence to interpret this extra-biblical inscription. Deuteronomy 29 also lists a series of curses that will befall Israel should they violate the covenant. Deuteronomy 29:26 (ET 29:27) sums up the reason that Yahweh will pour out all of these misfortunes on his people: “the anger of Yahweh burned against that land (*wayyihar-’ap yhw h bā’āreš hahī*) to bring upon it every curse which is written in this book.” In other words,

like Chemosh, Yahweh was angry with the land. There is no way to know what happened in Moab to provoke Chemosh's fury. But, judging from the biblical evidence, someone, whether it was the former king, the priesthood, or the people, probably did something to anger him. The fact that Mesha felt the need to record his deity's anger on a stele suggests the importance of this explanation for misfortune in the national history of at least some Levantine states. It is no surprise, then, that Israelites would look to this explanation first to interpret their misfortunes as well.

The ethnic caricatures of the Deuteronomistic tradition

This chapter has shown that the Deuteronomistic tradition, in addition to clearly constructing ethnic groups (see Chapter Four), sees them as highly entitative because it attaches rigid stereotypes, motives and expected behaviors to them. Though the Deuteronomistic tradition must deal with the realities of fluid ethnic boundaries, it constantly elucidates, in a positive sense, the nature of foreigners, their dispositions and inherent properties. In some cases, even physical characteristics are mentioned. There are different kinds of foreigners: the resident alien, the Canaanite, consigned to annihilation or total exclusion, the Amalekite doomed to destruction because of past actions, the Philistine, an enemy marked by the barbaric practice of keeping their foreskins intact, the Edomite and Egyptian, who may join the community after three generations, the Sidonian, a dangerous and potentially corrupting ally and the Ammonite and Moabite who are excluded from Israelite social life permanently because of prior deeds. There are also unnamed foreigners from far away who can bring destruction to Israel.

The treatment of each of these foreigners, or the privileges and access they receive within Israelite society, depends on who they are. For the most part, the Canaanites, the purportedly indigenous inhabitants of the land, are absolutely excluded from the community of Israel. Intermarriage and indeed all forms of social intercourse with them are strictly forbidden. Deuteronomistic texts allow other foreigners to integrate into their society, such as the foreign resident alien (*gēr*) and the Edomite and Egyptian. In the case of the latter two, after three generations, a male member of these two foreign peoples may join the congregation of Yahweh. Fascinatingly, the Deuteronomistic rules for the incorporation of the Egyptian and Edomite conform to many anthropological observations about the inclusion of outsiders within an ethnic group. It is almost always the case that outsiders cannot simply “join” another ethnic group simply by declaration or even by accepting the customs of the group (see example of Rahab, Josh 6:22–5, p. 115). It seems the perception of foreignness persists until a significant amount of time passes and intermarriage for several generations occurs.⁸³ We are left to wonder about the status of women from these groups in the Deuteronomistic conceptualization of ethnic foreignness. We are also left to wonder about other foreigners, such as

Arameans, various Mesopotamian peoples and foreigners from further away. How would people from these foreign ethnic groups become a part of the nation of Israel? Would they become incorporated by becoming a resident alien? How many generations would it take before they were considered a part of the community?

The Deuteronomistic tradition associates religious customs it dislikes with foreigners, which serves an ideological purpose. Yet, the Deuteronomistic tradition does not always suppress the past. The emphatic protest, “which I never commanded!” put in the mouth of Yahweh reveals that the Deuteronomistic tradition is responding to a widespread belief that certain religious customs were, in fact, commanded by Israel’s God. The tradition must also acknowledge that important historical figures participated in customs with which it disagrees. The portrayal of certain customs as foreign was a choice that the Deuteronomistic authors made because they clearly acknowledged, in other instances, that Israelites invented some of the religious customs with which it disapproved (the bronze serpent, 2 Kgs 18:4; Gideon’s ephod, Judg 8:27).

The tradition takes pains to define the nature and character of foreigners, but it also goes to great lengths to define what makes Israel unique and superior. Deuteronomistic authors manipulate West Semitic and ancient Near Eastern customs to differentiate Israelites from non-Israelites. The tradition deploys circumcision, a common West Semitic practice, to negatively cast the Philistines as people who engage in socially shameful acts. The cultic diet of West Semitic peoples and the association of certain foods like pork with defilement, even in Mesopotamia, was perhaps used to emphasize the holiness of the people of Israel. The prohibition on freelance religious specialization (i.e., “sorcery” and “witchcraft”) played into a general suspicion in the ancient Near East toward them. By characterizing this kind of religious specialization as entirely foreign, Israel could claim cultural superiority over other societies that tolerated them. Wisdom, something also highly valued throughout the ancient Near East, uniquely characterized Israel because it had special access to wisdom through its relationship with Yahweh, who also happened to be the Supreme God of the cosmos. Even if Israelites, through their disloyalty, do not follow Yahweh’s laws, they still have exclusive access to Yahweh’s statutes and judgments, which lead to wisdom and discernment. This privileged access, guaranteed by Israelites’ relationship to their ancestors with whom Yahweh made a covenant, is also a source of their future redemption, according to the Deuteronomistic tradition.

Notes

- 1 But note that the Deuteronomistic tradition never actually uses the noun *gēr* directly in reference to an Israelite. Lev 25:35 does use the noun *gēr* to refer to a native Israelite who becomes so poor that he must become the dependent of another Israelite, who must then “sustain him [as a] resident alien and temporary laborer

- (*heḥēzaqtā bô gēr wētôšāb*)”—showing that the Holiness tradition does acknowledge that a native Israelite can become like a *gēr*. But when referring to Israelites, Deuteronomistic texts prefer the verb *gūr* instead of the noun, *gēr* (Deut 18:6; Judg 17:7–9; 19:16). To assert that the Deuteronomistic tradition shows that an Israelite can become a “resident alien” (as a *noun*), one would have to assume that when the verbal root *gūr*, appears, it implies that the Israelite has become a *gēr* (a reasonable conclusion, in my view). For the various interpretations of the *gēr* in biblical texts see Olyan, *Rites and Rank*, 68–81; Christiania van Houten, *The Alien in Israelite Law* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1991); Christoph Bultmann, *Der Fremde in antiken Juda: Eine Untersuchung zum sozialen Typenbegriff >ger< und seinem Bedeutungswandel in der alttestamentliche Gesetzgebung* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1992). See also 117–22.
- 2 Olyan, *Rites and Rank*, 69.
 - 3 The list of nations and the order in which they appear varies widely in the Deuteronomistic tradition as well as throughout the Bible. For a review, see Tomoo Ishida, “The Structure and Historical Implications of the Lists of Pre-Israelite Nations,” *Bib* 60 (1979): 461–90.
 - 4 Deut 4:38; 7:1, 17, 22; 8:20; 9:1, 4–5; 11:23; 12:2, 29–30; 17:14; 18:9, 14; 19:1; 20:15; 29:18; 31:3; Josh 23:4, 7, 9; 23:12; 23:13; Judg 2:21, 23; 3:3; 1 Kgs 11:2; 14:24; 16:3; 2 Kgs 17:9; 17:11; 21:2, 9.
 - 5 Deut 6:14; 7:16; 20:16 [ET 20:17]; Josh 24:18; Judg 2:12.
 - 6 Josh 2:9, 24; 7:9; 9:24; Judg 1:32–3; 2:2; 1 Sam 27:8; 2 Sam 5:6.
 - 7 John Van Seters, “The Terms ‘Amorite’ and ‘Hittite’ in the Old Testament,” *VT* 22 (1972): 66. I find Van Seters’ argument that these are borrowed Neo-Assyrian terms for the inhabitants of Syria-Palestine more convincing than arguments that there were actually Hittite settlements in the land, especially at the time in which the first Deuteronomistic texts developed.
 - 8 Van Seters, “‘Amorite’ and ‘Hittite,’” 72.
 - 9 Chapter Three, pp. 76–8.
 - 10 What, exactly an “asherah” is, and especially its possible relationship to a goddess of the same name, who might have been a spouse for Yahweh has been ferociously debated by scholars. Based on biblical texts, it is certainly envisioned as some kind of wooden object. For an overview see Saul M. Olyan, *Asherah and the Cult of Yahweh in Israel* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1988); William Dever, “Asherah, Consort of Yahweh?” *BASOR* 255 (1984): 21–37; Mark S. Smith, *The Early History of God: Yahweh and the Other Deities in Ancient Israel* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1990), 80–97.
 - 11 Reading LXX, “Astarte,” for MT’s *‘aštōret*, which may be part of an MT convention of using the vowels for the word “shame” (*bōšet*) to render the names of some deities or divine epithets. See also MT’s “Ishbosheth” for LXX’s “Ishbaal” in 2 Sam 2:10, 12, 15; 2 Sam 3:8, 14–15; 2 Sam 4:5, 8, 12 and MT’s “Mephibosheth” for LXX’s Meribaal. Alternatively, Gordon Hamilton, “New Evidence for the Authenticity of BŠT in Hebrew Personal Names and for Its Use as a Divine Epithet in Biblical Texts,” *CBQ* 60 (1998): 228–50, argues that the root *bšt* in personal names conveys “protective spirit” [Akkadian: *bāštu*], possibly an epithet for a god, because it often appears in Amorite personal names. Hamilton also contends that certain passages such as Hos 9:10 have turned the root *bšt* into a double entendre, intending the root vocalized as *bōšet* to refer to a divine epithet and to also mean “shame.”

- 12 The Deuteronomistic tradition created an interesting dilemma when it compiled the different traditions about the Sidonians. On the one hand, Sidonians are often cast as dangerous people like the Canaanites (see also Gen 10:5). Josh 13:6 includes Sidonians among the people that Yahweh will drive out, and all of Lebanon is promised to Israel as a possession (Josh 13:5). Sidonians are also included among the nations Yahweh left to test Israel (Judg 3:1–4) and are included in an expanded, possibly post-exilic, list of nations with which Israelites should not associate (1 Kgs 11:2). Of course, Solomon is said to have defied this rule and married Sidonian women (1 Kgs 11:1), which caused him to set up a cult to Astarte, their goddess. On the other hand, the tradition preserves stories in which David and Solomon have friendly relationships with Hiram of Tyre (1 Kgs 5:16–20). 1 Kgs 5:16, like Josh 13:6, seems to suggest that the population of all Phoenician city states such as Tyre and Sidon, or perhaps all the inhabitants of Lebanon, are generally Sidonians. Even though some texts recognize the term “Tyrian” (1 Kgs 7:14 in reference to Hiram with whom Solomon has made the lumber arrangement; see also late texts 1 Chr 22:4 and Ezra 3:7, which separate Tyrians and Sidonians), 1 Kgs 5:16 and Josh 13:13 label all inhabitants of Lebanon “Sidonians.” As a result, the contradictory picture that emerges is that Israel needs friendly relations with “Sidonians” for lumber, but elsewhere the text insists that Sidonians are among the nations with which Israel cannot associate.
- 13 Taking the *wě-* of *wěšemeš* as an exegetical *waw*. Possibly a gloss (Nelson, *Deuteronomy*, 216).
- 14 On what “kind” of child sacrifice Ezekiel discusses, and more information on the practice, see Chapter Six, pp. 192–3, *Child Sacrifice: For Molech, for the “King,” or a “Molek” Offering?*
- 15 For another perspective, see Scott W. Hahn and John S. Bergsma, “What Laws Were ‘Not Good?’ A Canonical Approach to the Theological Problem of Ezekiel 20:25–6,” *JBL* 123 (2004): 201–18. Hahn and Bergsma argue that Ezek 20:25–6 does not refer to the sacrifice of firstborn children to Yahweh. The circumstantial evidence, however, certainly points in that direction. Hahn and Bergsma contend that the use of *bēkôr* with respect to human beings (*’ādām*) “exclude them from the consecrated ‘firstlings’ of the previous verse” (212). Yes, human offspring are excluded from the offerings of the non-human firstlings, but only because humans must be redeemed. The logic of the passage suggests that the first born “belongs” to Yahweh, but, similar to the mandate to redeem a donkey with a sheep, the human being must be redeemed by the offeror. The best reading of Exod 13:12–15 (ET 12:11–16) and other passages that concern the sacrifice of the firstborn, is that the sacrifice of the firstborn child must be substituted by the sacrifice of a non-human animal, per Yahweh’s command. Verses 15–16 clearly connect the sacrificial slaughter of firstborn non-humans with the redemption of the firstborn human male. See also Exod 22:8; 34:19.
- 16 Jon D. Levenson, *The Death and Resurrection of the Beloved Son: The Transformation of Child Sacrifice in Judaism and Christianity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 3–17.
- 17 See Psalms 106:37–9, which asserts that Israelites sacrificed their children to “demons” and “the idols of Canaan.” See also Lev 18:21–7, which will be addressed in the next chapter.

- 18 The precise meanings of the words used for these "ritual arts" in Deut 18:10 such as *qsm*, *'nn*, *nhš*, and *kšp* are unknown. For details, see Rüdiger Schmitt, *Magie im Alten Testament* (Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 2004); Brian B. Schmidt, "Canaanite Magic vs. Israelite Religion: Deuteronomy 18 and the Taxonomy of Taboo," in *Magic and Ritual in the Ancient World* (ed. Paul Mirecki and Marvin Meyer; Leiden: Brill, 2001), 250–4. Also, Nelson, *Deuteronomy*, 233 and Johan Lust, "On Wizards and Prophets," in *Studies on Prophecy* (ed. Daniel Lys; VTSup 26; Leiden: Brill, 1974), 133–42.
- 19 See, for example, *Šurpu*, II.68. In Akkadian, the word *kišpulkašāpu*, used to describe some form of ritual specialization, is cognate with the Hebrew *kšp*, as in the *mēkaššēp* ("sorcerer") in Deut 18:10. See also 2 Kgs 9:22; Jer 27:9. Exod 22:17 (ET 22:18) mentions the feminine form ("sorceress").
- 20 Robert Oden, "Religious Identity and the Sacred Prostitution Accusation," in idem, *The Bible without Theology: The Theological Tradition and Alternatives to It* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1987), 131–53.
- 21 Joan Westenholz, "Tamar, Qedesha, Qadishtu," *HTR* 82 (1989): 245–65; Mayer Gruber, "Hebrew Qedesah and Her Akkadian Cognates," *UF* 18 (1986): 133–48.
- 22 There is some evidence that freelance magicians worked on the street and went door-to-door performing their respective arts. All of the evidence relates to male magicians such as the *āšipu*, the *eššepu* and the *mušlahhu* (Richard A. Henshaw, *Female and Male: The Cultic Personnel; the Bible and the Rest of the Ancient Near East* [Allison Park, Penn.: Pickwick, 1994], 108, 145).
- 23 Some Mesopotamian sources do not portray magicians, or freelance religious specialists, favorably either. They can be the subject of bitter polemics (Henshaw, *Female and Male*, 164, 203, 300).
- 24 Phyllis Bird, "The End of the Male Cult Prostitute: A Literary-Historical and Sociological Analysis of Hebrew Qadesh-Qedeshim," in *Congress Volume: Cambridge 1995* (ed. John Emerton; VTSup 66; Leiden: Brill, 1997), 37–80.
- 25 Westenholz points out that in the myth of Enlil and Sud, Enlil mistakes Sud for a prostitute because she is standing in the street ("Tamar, Qedesah, Qadistu," 251).
- 26 In Palestine, shrines have been found in or near gate installations in sites dating from the Middle Bronze II period, such as Tel Mor, Ashkelon, Tel el-Far'ah, Hazor, and apparently from the Iron Age at Tel Dan (Beth Alpert Nakhai, *Archaeology and the Religions of Canaan and Israel* [Boston: ASOR, 2001], 101–7, 185; Tryggve N.D. Mettinger, *No Graven Image? Israelite Aniconism and Its Ancient Near Eastern Context* [Stockholm: Almqvist and Wiksell International, 1995], 177).
- 27 Saul M. Olyan, *Biblical Mourning: Ritual and Social Dimensions* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 103ff. Olyan notes that though the legal corpora condemn depilation and laceration for mourning, they seem to be acceptable in other sources.
- 28 I disagree with Nelson's suggestion that mourning rituals are prohibited because Israelites considered the "sphere of the dead to be an unclean realm incompatible with holiness, under the sway of powers outside of Yahweh's rule," because Deut 14:1 does not condemn other mourning rituals (Nelson, *Deuteronomy*, 179).
- 29 The allotted time for mourning is typically seven days. The appearance of lacerations and depilation would certainly last longer than that (Olyan, *Biblical Mourning*, 115).

- 30 For archaeological evidence of standing stones in ancient Palestine, see Mettinger, *Aniconism*, 135–96.
- 31 Römer, *Deuteronomistic History*, 42.
- 32 Prov 4:17; Mic 6:10–11; Hos 10:13; Ezek 5:6; 7:11; Isa 58:6; Qoh 3:16.
- 33 Perhaps from the Apology of David. See McCarter, *1 Samuel*.
- 34 Olyan, *Rites and Rank*, 66.
- 35 For examples of circumcision in Syria and Palestine dating from the third millennium BCE on, see Jack M. Sasson, "Circumcision in the Ancient Near East," *JBL* 85 (1966): 473–6.
- 36 Based on the argument that Hivvite is a scribal error for Horite. The argument relies on LXX's rendering of Hivvite with Hurrian (or "Horite") */chorraios/ hôrî* on a number of occasions, including Gen. 34:2 (see also LXX Josh 9:7). Genesis 36:2, 20 refers to Zibeon both as a Hivvite and as a son of Seir, the Horite. See Robert North, "The Hivvites," *Bib* 54 (1973): 53–6; Ephraim A. Speiser, "Horite," *IDB* (1962) II, 645–64.
- 37 Othniel Margalith points out that the Vulgate and some Old Latin versions read "Hivite" in Gen 34:2, "proving that the error was in the Septuaginta" ("The Hivvites," *ZAW* 100 [1988]: 64). Also, Roland de Vaux has some reservations in "Les Hurrites de l'histoire et les Horites de la Bible," *RB* 74 (1967): 499. See also North, "The Hivvites," 60.
- 38 North, "The Hivvites," 58.
- 39 Margalith, "The Hivvites," 65–70. Margalith's position is based on an ingenious and complicated text-critical argument based on the LXX use of *euaïos* to render "Hivvite." Margalith argues that the initial article ha- assimilated the initial "a" of the gentilic (Ahijawa), and that the guttural (*h-*) in the second syllable was softened to *h*. Then, according to Margalith, the rough breathing mark shifted from the second sound to the first sound, a common occurrence in Greek (*ahaïos* > *heuaïos*). Finally, for some reason, the rough breathing on the initial syllable dropped out altogether. As a result, LXX renders the group as *euaïos*. These are a lot of steps and some are not adequately explained, such as the dropping of the rough breathing or the diphthong *eu* at the beginning of the word. More important, if the Hivvites were understood to be the Achaeans, why did LXX never simply use the common Greek term for Achaeans, *Achaïoi*?
- 40 Olyan, *Rites and Rank*, 67.
- 41 Verses 12–31 of 1 Sam 17 do not appear in LXX^B. These verses could possibly be a Hellenistic addition to the text (McCarter, *1 Samuel*, 306–9).
- 42 For some other examples of the association of "reproach" and taunting or scorning someone, see Ps 44:13; 79:4; 109:25; 119:22; Prov 18:3; Jer 20:8; 23:40; Ezek 5:14; 22:4; 36:15; Zeph 2:8.
- 43 Walter Houston, *Purity and Monotheism: Clean and Unclean Animals in Biblical Law* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1992), 149–50.
- 44 *Ibid.*, 151–2.
- 45 *Ibid.*, 152–3. Whether deer is a sacrificial animal in the Marseilles Tarriff depends on whether one reads 'yl as 'ayil (ram) or 'ayyāl (hart). Houston believes the latter is the best reading because there is already a word for ram in the text (*ybl*), which would make another word for "ram" superfluous.
- 46 *Ibid.*, 87ff.

- 47 Ibid., 156–7.
- 48 BWL 215:13–15; AHW 906a; Karel van der Toorn, *Sin and Sanction in Israel and Mesopotamia: A Comparative Study* (Studia Semetica Neerlandica 22; Assen, Netherlands: Van Gorcum, 1985), 34.
- 49 SbTU I 44:73f.; van der Toorn, *Sin and Sanction*, 34.
- 50 This also seems to be the reasoning behind the prohibition of other foods such as fish, leeks, garlic and pork before prayer and on certain festival days, according to some texts. Van der Toorn suggests that bad breath might have been a motive behind these food prohibitions. See van der Toorn, *Sin and Sanction*, 33.
- 51 Houston, *Purity and Monotheism*, 157.
- 52 Ibid., 149.
- 53 A Deuteronomic retelling of the tradition appearing in the Yahwistic Numbers 13–14. See Nelson, *Deuteronomy*, 25.
- 54 Van Seters, “‘Amorite’ and ‘Hittite’”; Cornelius Houtman, “Die ursprüngliche Bewohner des Landes Kanaan im Deuteronomium: Sinn und Absicht der Beschreibung ihrer Identität und ihres Charakters,” *VT* 52 (2002): 52.
- 55 For other references to the Anakim, see Deut 2:10, 11, 21; 9:2; Josh 11:21–2; 14:12, 15. The identity of the biblical Rephaim and its relationship to the Ugaritic *rapi’ūma*, mentioned in a few texts from Ras Shamra (CTA 20–2), is a matter of scholarly debate and discussion. See, for example, Shemaryahu Talmon, “Biblical rephā’im and Ugaritic rpul(i)m,” *HAR* 7 (1983): 235–49; Marvin H. Pope, “Notes on the Ugaritic Rephaim Texts,” in *Essays on the Ancient Near East in Memory of Jacob Joel Finkelstein* (ed. Maria de Jong Ellis; Hamden, Conn: Archon Books, 1977), 163–82; Conrad L’Heureux, “Ugaritic and Biblical Rephaim,” *HTR* 67 (1974): 265–74; Johannes C. de Moor, “Rāpi’ūma – rephaim,” *ZAW* 88 (1976): 323–45; John Gray, “Dtn and rp’um in Ancient Ugarit,” *Palestine Exploration Quarterly* 84 (1952): 39–41.
- 56 For Amos’ possible relationship to the Deuteronomistic tradition, see discussion in Sparks, *Ethnicity*, 183.
- 57 This argument is presented in its entirety in Brian Rainey, “Their Peace or Prosperity: Biblical Concepts of Hereditary Punishment and the Exclusion of Foreigners in Ezra-Nehemiah,” *JAJ* 6 (2015): 158–81.
- 58 For a review, see Saul M. Olyan, “‘Sie sollen nicht in die Gemeinde des Herrn kommen’: Aspekte gesellschaftlicher Inklusion und Exklusion in Dtn 23, 4–9 und seine frühen Auslegungen,” in *Social Inequality in the World of the Text: The Significance of Ritual and Social Distinctions in the Hebrew Bible* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2011), 155–77.
- 59 Wills, *Not God’s People*, 29; Kaminsky, “Mistreatment,” 402.
- 60 Ibid., 33.
- 61 Kaminsky, “Mistreatment,” 404.
- 62 Jeffrey C. Geoghegan, “‘Until This Day’ and the Preexilic Redaction of the Deuteronomistic History,” *JBL* 122 (2003): 201–27; idem, *The Time, Place and Purpose of the Deuteronomistic History: The Evidence of ‘Until this Day’* (BJS 347; Providence, R.I.: Brown Judaic Studies, 2006). See Nelson, *Double Redaction*, 23–4 for another view.
- 63 Despite the fact that many of his conclusions are outdated, John Bright provides a good, concise summary of the textual problems with the conquest narratives in *A History of Israel* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox, 2000), 129–43.

- 64 Elsewhere, Solomon is said to have conscripted Israelites as corvée labor (1 Kgs 5:27–32). The insistence that Solomon only conscripted Canaanites, and not Israelites, could be an apologetic claim.
- 65 See P. Kyle McCarter, *II Samuel* (AB 9; New York: Doubleday, 1984), 445–6; Steven McKenzie, *King David: A Biography* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 124–5; Baruch Halpern, *David's Secret Demons: Messiah, Murderer, Traitor, King* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2004), 341–4.
- 66 The “but rather” (*kî ’im*) seems to emphasize the contrast between the Israelites and Gibeonites.
- 67 If the temple cannot accept money from people the Deuteronomistic tradition finds objectionable (the *zōnā*), it seems likely that it could not accept labor from people it finds objectionable (see Deut 23:19 [ET 23:18]).
- 68 McCarter, following Wellhausen, argues that the text should be amended to follow the LXX^{AB} reading, which has Yahweh in Gibeon (*bēgib ’ōn*) as opposed to the MT’s Yahweh in Gibeah. McCarter suggests the emendation, “before Yahweh in Gibeon on the mountain of Yahweh.” If this reconstruction is correct, the text would show that the Gibeonites worshipped a local manifestation of Yahweh, most likely on a high place (a mountain). If the Gibeonites had their own cult shrine, this would be more evidence of their Yahwism (McCarter, *II Samuel*, 438).
- 69 The conquest of Ai was most likely not an historical event, but the story of its conquest was an etiology to explain the destruction of a much older city, whose ruins still remained during the Iron Age settlement of Palestine (Amahai Mazar, *Archaeology of the Land of the Bible: 10,000–586 BCE* [ABRL; New York: Doubleday, 1992], 331–2).
- 70 See Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomistic School*, 142; Geoghegan, “Until this Day,” 211–2.
- 71 ANET 1, 209–10; KAI 1, 41–2 (181).
- 72 Chapter Three, pp. 68–76.
- 73 Chapter Three, pp. 68–71, 75–6.
- 74 Preserving *mī* (“who”) as the relative pronoun, to emphasize that nations are thought to derive from single progenitors, and are often represented as individual persons (e.g., Jacob, Joseph).
- 75 There are some textual problems with Deut 4:36–7. There is a strange *wētaḥat* that appears at the beginning of verse 37 that probably belongs to verse 36 (as *watteḥī*, “...and you lived,” see BHS n. 36/37a). In addition, what I have rendered “chose their descendants after them” reads in the MT *wayyibḥar bēzar’ō ’aḥārāyw* (singular third person masculine pronominal suffixes). Many manuscripts including LXX, Syriac, and the Vulgate render the text as if the Hebrew had third person plural pronominal suffixes.
- 76 Deut 4:19 and 32:8 seem to pose problems for the idea that Deuteronomy promotes “monotheism.” That nations argued over whose god was supreme is shown by “Marduk’s Ordeal,” a story reenacted during the Assyrian version of the *akitu* festival, which claimed that the Babylonian god, Marduk, challenged the authority of the Assyrian god, Assur, and was imprisoned in the *akitu* house for seven days. See Mark E. Cohen, *The Cultic Calendars of the Ancient Near East* (Bethesda, Md.: CDL Press, 1993), 420–5.
- 77 Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomistic School*, 255–7.

- 78 Ibid., 150–1. Weinfeld argues that the expression *ḥuqqîm ûmišpāṭîm šaddîqîm* is similar to the expression found in the Code of Hammurabi, *dīnat mīšarim* (CH 24b: 1–2). Weinfeld may be correct that Deuteronomy 4, as a major editorial frame for the Deuteronomic corpus in general, frames the laws as a typical law code as opposed to a treaty.
- 79 Particularly the Egyptian Teaching of Amenemope (ANET 2, 422). Ibid., 266; J. Fichtner, *Die altorientalische Weisheit in ihrer israelitisch-jüdischer Ausprägung* (BZAW 62; Giessen: A Töpelmann, 1933).
- 80 Nelson, *Deuteronomy*, 101. I suspect a particular Christian theological interpretation underpins these kinds of readings, in that Yahweh’s relationship with Israel is the result of “grace” and not “works.” On the contrary, *somebody’s* works and merit caused Israel’s election, even if it was an ancestor.
- 81 Ibid., 372.
- 82 Shown by the expression “rider of heaven” (*rōkēb šāmayim*) which is similar to the expression “rider of the clouds” an epithet of the storm god. Riding in the heavens is a quality of a storm god (For the Ugaritic god, Hadad: CAT/KTU 1.19, 42–4; CAT/KTU 1.2, IV, 8, 29; CAT/KTU 1.3, III, 38; IV, 4 *et passim*; CAT/KTU 1.10, I, 7; III, 21, 36; For Yahweh: Psa 68:5, cf. Psa 68:33–4 [ET 68:32–3]; 104:1–4; Isa 19:1). See Simon B. Parker, ed., *Ugaritic Narrative Poetry* (SBLWAW 9; Atlanta, Ga.: Scholars Press, 1997), 69, 103, 112, 182, 186.
- 83 See discussion and references in Nestor, *Cognitive Perspectives*, 102–4. Nestor highlights several ethnographic studies showing that “while intermarriage is a means by which individuals manage to transit ethnic boundaries, it is only after three generations of intermarriage that a person is considered a full-member of the caste or ethnic group with whom the marriages occurred” (104).

“I WAS REPULSED BY THEM”

Caricatures of foreigners in holiness texts

We now move to the negative caricatures of foreigners in the Holiness tradition, which dates to the Babylonian exile (after 587/6 BCE). Consequently, it serves as a rich fount of information about ideological constructions of foreigners in literate ancient Israelite circles at that time. Here, I navigate Holiness language and rhetoric to discuss what stereotypes and moral characteristics the tradition affixes to these foreigners. Namely, the Holiness tradition alleges that the former inhabitants of the land of Canaan (as well as Egyptians) indulged in all kinds of sexual perversions and untold violations of the patriarchal household. In addition, the Holiness tradition contends that the former inhabitants of the land of Canaan indulged in these sexual perversions so much that it defiled the land so that Yahweh permanently expelled them.

Abominable statutes: foreigners and sexual taboos in the holiness tradition

The Holiness Code begins to negatively portray foreigners in Leviticus 18, its famous list of sexual prohibitions. Anti-foreigner language frames the two lists of sexual and social taboos that appear in Leviticus 18 and 20. The former chapter lists the forbidden practices and the latter chapter prescribes punishments for those who commit them—along with a few other offenses not mentioned in Chapter 18. The polemical framing asserts that the former inhabitants of the land, and Egyptians, committed all of these acts wantonly. The chapters accuse these foreigners of incest, child sacrifice, necromancy, adultery, sexual activity between men and bestiality. Indeed, the text asserts that the foreigners indulged in these sexual taboos so much that they became “statutes” and “customs,” suggesting that sexual taboos were part of their way of life:

I am Yahweh your God. You shall not act (*ta’āšû*) according to the convention (*ma’āšēh*) of the land of Egypt in which you lived, nor shall you act according to the convention (*ma’āšēh*) of the land of

Canaan to which I brought you, nor shall you walk by their statutes (*ḥuqqōt*). You shall observe (*ʾšh*) my regulations (*mišpāṭay*) and as for my statutes you will be on guard to walk according to them. I am Yahweh your God (Lev 18:3–4).

Interpreters translate the terminology in this passage in different ways. The word *maʾāseh*, which I have translated “convention,” is a versatile word that can denote deed, activity, action or occupation. I believe the use of this word conveys the idea that Israelites should not act according to the convention or “way of life” of the land of Egypt or Canaan, taking my cue for interpretation from Judg 13:12, a passage that describes the Nazirite regimen prescribed for Samson and his mother. In this passage, Yahweh promises Manoah, whose wife is barren, a son, who, as the reader discovers later, will turn out to be the famous Israelite hero, Samson. Manoah then asks Yahweh, “What will be the lad’s regimen (*mišpāṭ*) and manner of conduct (*maʾāseh*)?” Yahweh responds directly to Manoah’s query by ordering that Samson’s mother adhere to the regulations of the Nazirite, a religious order open to men and women that requires abstinence from alcohol and forbids haircuts. Here, *maʾāseh* seems to describe the way of life or regime by which Samson and his mother must live. It is especially interesting that in Judg 13:12, *maʾāseh* appears in juxtaposition with *mišpāṭ*, a word used frequently by the Holiness tradition to describe the rules by which Israelites must live—especially within the framing of the sexual taboos. Throughout the Holiness Code, Yahweh repeatedly exhorts the Israelites to observe (*ʾšh*) and keep (*šmr*) his “regulations” (*mišpāṭīm*) (Lev 18:4–5, 26; 19:37; 20:22; 24:22; 25:18; 26:15). It may not even be too far afield to translate *maʾāseh* as “culture.”

Notably, the Lev 18:1–5 neither mentions the former inhabitants of the land nor the Egyptian *people* themselves. Rather, both the convention (*maʾāseh*) and the statutes (*ḥuqqōt*) seem to be connected with the lands, as physical spaces. It is possible, obviously, that the lands of Egypt and Canaan serve as representations of the people who inhabit them. It is equally possible that the inhabitants are omitted in 18:1–5 deliberately. After listing a series of mostly sexual taboos (or “abominations”) forbidden to Israelites, Leviticus 18 closes with further exhortations:

Do not defile yourselves by all these [abominations], for the nations which I am impelling before you were defiled by all these [abominations]. And the land was defiled and I visited its iniquity upon it and the land vomited out its inhabitants. But you shall keep my statutes and my regulations. You shall not act according to all these abominations, both the native and resident alien who resides as an alien among you—for all these abominations the men of the land who were before you did so the land was defiled—so that the land will not vomit you out as it vomited out the nation that was before

you. If anyone should do any of these abominations, the individuals doing them shall be cut off from their people. And you shall keep my charge to not do the abominable statutes that were done before you, and do not be defiled by them. I am Yahweh your God (Lev 18:24–30).

As this passage concluding Chapter 18 suggests, the omission of the inhabitants of the land in Lev 18:3 emphasizes that the *lands* of Egypt and Canaan have their own properties or “personalities.”¹ One land, Canaan, cannot tolerate the defiling taboos listed in Leviticus 18, or it will vomit its inhabitants out. Leviticus 18:24–30 also shows that the land of Canaan can incur defilement, but the text does not claim that Egypt can incur defilement. In fact, Egyptians are not said to have defiled themselves through these acts, either. Only the inhabitants of the land of *Canaan* can become defiled by committing the forbidden acts listed in Leviticus 18 and 20. It should be noted that though the land is said to vomit out its inhabitants on account of their impurity, that this is not an *automatic* consequence of defilement. Rather, the land vomited out its inhabitants when Yahweh “visited its iniquity upon it” (Lev 18:25). In other words, it is Yahweh who *induces* the vomiting of the land through punishment. The imagery of the land as a living thing that can eat and vomit appears in the Priestly tradition, and seems to have been adopted by the Holiness tradition. For example, in Numbers 16 (Priestly), the ground opens and swallows Korah’s descendants so that they descend alive into the underworld (Num 16:30–3). Here also the land acts only at Yahweh’s prompting (Num 16:20–1).

The reference to Egypt in Lev 18:3 is noteworthy. First, Egypt only appears in Lev 18:3 and does not reappear elsewhere in the paranetic framing of Leviticus 18 and 20. Second, considering that the Canaanites are usually the target of biblical polemics against the former inhabitants of the land, the reference to Egypt is out of the ordinary.²

The reference to Egypt expands the Holiness tradition’s accusations of sexual immorality and shines more light on the Holiness view of the land of Israel. This passage makes a very clear distinction between the land that belongs to Yahweh and the land of Egypt. These immoral acts are supposedly the custom in the land of Canaan and the land of Egypt. However, only the land of Canaan cannot sustain these acts. If these acts are committed in the land of Canaan, the land vomits out its inhabitants.

“Uncover the nakedness”

Leviticus 18:6–7 is typical of many of the sexual prohibitions in Leviticus 18. It contains some key, recurring expressions critical to understanding how the Holiness tradition characterized the former inhabitants and Egyptians, including the expression “uncover the nakedness” which I discussed above:

No man (*’iš ’iš*) shall approach his near relative to uncover nakedness (*lēgallôt ’erwâ*). I am Yahweh. The nakedness of your father—that is, the nakedness of your mother—you shall not uncover. She is your mother; you shall not uncover her nakedness.

These passages engage a strong taboo, in various biblical texts, against the inappropriate exposure of genitalia (and certain other bodily functions such as seminal emissions and defecation).³ The improper display of “nakedness” constitutes a grave act of social impropriety that brings about serious social stigma to the person whose nakedness is exposed and for people who illegitimately expose someone’s genitalia. Elsewhere in the Bible, the malicious exposure of genitalia and the shame that it causes may have even sparked a war (2 Sam 10:4–5, see below).

By equating the nakedness of the father with the nakedness of the mother, the text of Leviticus 18 clarifies that the specific context in which the “nakedness” of a woman can be exposed is within the confines of a marriage relationship with the appropriate patriarchal head of household. By describing these sexual acts as “uncovering the nakedness,” instead of saying something to the effect of, “you shall not lie with” (*škb*), a sex idiom Leviticus 20 does use, Leviticus 18 engages a nexus of social shame associated with improper display of genitalia.

For men, the inappropriate exposure of their own genitalia is a particularly sensitive issue. In worship, it disgusts Yahweh to see male genitalia (Exod 20:26; 28:42), which demonstrates that even the inadvertent display of male genitalia in an inappropriate context is a negative thing. The taboo on the inadvertent display of genitalia also forms the basis of Michal’s condemnation of David in 2 Sam 6:20–1. The deliberate exposure of men humiliates those who are exposed and constitutes an act of domination and power, as Isa 20:4–5 demonstrates:

The king of Assyria will lead the captives of Egypt and the exiles of Cush, young and old, naked and barefoot, with buttocks (*šēt*) exposed—the exposed nakedness (*’erwat*) of Egypt. And they will be dismayed and ashamed (*bôšû*) because of Egypt their hope and Cush their glory.

In another instance, 2 Sam 10:4–5, Hanun the Ammonite exposes the buttocks of David’s ambassadors to forcefully communicate that he will break off his treaty with David:

And Hanun seized David’s servants and shaved off half their beards⁴ and cut their garments in the middle to their buttocks (*šētôtêhem*) and sent them away...When they told David he sent out to meet them because the men were greatly disgraced (*niklāmîm*). And the

king said, ‘Remain in Jericho until your beards grow back, and then return.

While 2 Sam 10:4–5 does not use the word “nakedness,” judging from Isa 20:4–5, exposure of the buttocks may amount to exposure of the genitalia. Note also the pairing of exposure with the cutting of the beard, an outward display of masculinity. That Hanun’s act constitutes an outrage is shown by the fact that it makes the Ammonites “putrid” (*nib’āšū*) to David. The word “to be putrid” (*b’š*) often has social meaning, and when someone becomes “putrid” to another person, the expectation is that the offended party will respond with violence (Gen 34:30; Exod 5:21; 1 Sam 13:4; 27:12; 2 Sam 16:21).

The “nakedness” discussed in Leviticus 18 and 20 is the genitalia of a woman, and the illegitimate exposure of a woman’s genitalia also shames her (Isa 47:3; Lam 1:8; Nah 3:5). But in many instances, the illegitimate exposure of female genitalia symbolizes a man divorcing his wife (Hos 2:10; Ezek 16:37; 23:29)⁵ and, conversely, the covering of a woman’s genitalia often signals the woman’s marriage (Hos 2:9; Ezek 16:8, 36).

Uncovering a woman’s nakedness in its right time and right place demonstrates respect for social boundaries and familial structures. When a woman’s nakedness is uncovered at the wrong time by the wrong people it is associated with social breakdown and, at times, disrespect for the patriarchal household, since the illegitimate undressing of women is often associated with acting like a *zōnā* (Ezek 16:36; 23:18; Isa 57:8). In Leviticus 18 and 20, the concept of “nakedness” serves as a rhetorical tool to erect boundaries of appropriateness between members of the family. Exposure of genitalia at the wrong time is offensive and shameful. Exposure of a betrothed or married woman’s genitalia to the wrong people is especially scandalous, as the nudity rhetoric in Hosea, Isaiah and Ezekiel demonstrate. Exposure of men’s genitalia to the wrong people, at the wrong time is disgraceful and those who expose men’s genitalia to humiliate them commit a social outrage.

With the idea of “nakedness,” Leviticus 18 shows that Canaanites and Egyptians did not respect these basic social boundaries and rules of decorum. Leviticus 18 probably builds off of earlier polemics against Canaanites in the patriarchal traditions. These traditions accuse the Canaanites of appalling sexual offenses; and they are capable of sadistic sexual violence against both women and men (Genesis 19; 34).

Abominations, lewdness and illicit mixings

Like Deuteronomistic material, Holiness texts associate the word “abomination” (*tō’ēbā*) with foreigners. The Holiness Code accuses the former inhabitants of egregious behavior, mostly concerning the patriarchal family, which it labels “abominations” and “abominable customs” (18:22, 26–7, 29–30). Since abomination means something to be hated, one salient question to

ask is, “abominations to whom?” The Deuteronomistic tradition defines forbidden religious icons, unclean animals, sacrificial victims with blemishes and defects, those who sacrifice their children, sorcerers, necromancers, (cultic?) cross-dressers, the wages of *zōnōt* and the payment of dogs, and people who act unjustly as abominations to *Yahweh* (*tô ‘ābat yhwḥ* [‘ēlōhēkā], Deut 7:25; 14:3; 17:1; 18:12; 22:5; 23:18; 25:16; 27:15).⁶ In Deut 24:4, a woman who has been divorced twice and remarries her first husband is an abomination before *Yahweh* (*lipnē yhwḥ*). Elsewhere, the religious practices of the Canaanites are “abominations which *Yahweh* hates” (Deut 12:31). The book of Proverbs renders many socially unjust and immoral behaviors, such as lying, false weights, evil devisings and pride, “abominations to *Yahweh*” (*tô ‘ābat yhwḥ*). For both Deuteronomy and Proverbs, which share a wisdom outlook,⁷ their “abominations” are, primarily, offenses to the deity. It has been argued by some that the use of “abomination” in Deuteronomy primarily refers to religious matters, or cultic impurity.⁸ But since the word refers to situations outside of worship, cultic impurity cannot explain the term entirely, even in Deuteronomy. Rather, Deuteronomy and Proverbs use the language of offense to the deity to stigmatize particular non-cultic acts and those who commit them. One use of “abomination” in the cognate Phoenician language, which says that the illegitimate opening of a tomb is “an abomination of Astarte” (*t’bt ‘štrt*, KAI 13.6), as well as Egyptian concepts of “abomination” (*bw.t*) suggest that when it comes to “abominations,” the offended party is usually a deity. Because it is often a deity who suffers the indignation of an “abomination,” it is unsurprising that most references to “abomination” target religious behaviors. But the fact that religious matters are most frequently referred to as abominations merely suggests that abomination is a term most frequently used to denote offense to the gods (a catchall for “stuff God does not like”), not that it is a primarily cultic term.

However, in the Hebrew Bible, something can be an abomination to human beings as well. Eating food with Hebrews, the profession of shepherding and sacrificing to *Yahweh* in the land of Egypt are said to be “abominations” to the Egyptians (Gen 43:32; 46:34; Exod 8:26). Someone can even become an abomination to their friends (Ps 88:9 [ET 88:8]⁹). And so, there is a social aspect to “abomination” as well.

Deuteronomy 7:25–6 may hold the key to understanding this complex word. When it comes to prohibited statues and icons, just as *Yahweh* finds these icons to be *abominations*, so the Israelites are to utterly *abominate* them (Deut 7:25–6, compare 12:31). Through the interchange between “abomination to *Yahweh*” and “you (the Israelites) shall utterly abominate it” in Deut 7:25–6, the Deuteronomistic tradition communicates that because *Yahweh* hates these icons, so should the Israelites. By juxtaposing *Yahweh*’s hatred of prohibited religious icons with the exhortation to the people to hate prohibited icons, Deut 7:25–6 combines both the divine and social senses of “abomination.” It is an abomination to *Yahweh* and therefore is (or, at least, should

be) an abomination to Israel as well. Consequently, the use of “abomination” to describe forbidden foods in Deuteronomy is purposeful (Deut 14:3). As I, following Houston, argued in Chapter Four, Israel has most likely made the diet of West Semitic peoples, based on foods thought to edible for the gods, required for the Israelites. The idea of “abomination” as it relates to forbidden food is: if the gods hate these foods, we should hate them too. In the same way, the abominations of Leviticus 18 are primarily offenses to the deity, even though Yahweh never says that the offenses are “abominations to Yahweh,” as the book of Deuteronomy does. Yet, the Holiness tradition’s argument seems to be that because Yahweh hates these social practices, the Israelites should as well. The use of “abomination” in Leviticus 18 reinforces the entire “holiness” theme of H, in that the Israelites should be holy as Yahweh is holy. As Yahweh, their holy God hates these acts, so Israelites, who are also holy, will adopt his perspective and hate them as well in a kind of *imitatio dei*.¹⁰

Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13: a proscription on perceived male sexual “passivity”

The singling out of a kind of sexual activity between males as an “abomination” has puzzled interpreters. If Leviticus 18 defines all of the forbidden acts as “abominations,” why does Lev 18:22; 20:13 single out this particular sexual act as an “abomination”? Some assert that the double use of “abomination” in Leviticus 18 betrays the work of multiple authors.¹¹ But if the author of Lev 18:22; 20:13 is not the same author who wrote the framing of Leviticus 18 and 20, what could the author of this same-sex prohibition have meant by “abomination”?

Many interpret Lev 18:22 and 20:13 as a prohibition on “homosexuality.” As many have noted, there are anthropological and interpretative problems with applying an ancient proscription on same-sex behavior to modern concepts of sexuality. The sex idiom used in Lev 18:22; 20:13 (literally: “lie the lyings of a woman”) is bizarre, even for the Holiness tradition. The “as with” provided by most English translations to render “you shall not lie with a male *as with* a woman” is a speculative reconstruction that attempts to make sense of this strange expression. Going against the grain of the majority of interpreters, I, following Jerome T. Walsh, suspect that Lev 18:22; 20:13 addresses, specifically the “receptive” man (or, to use a certain vernacular expression, “the bottom”).¹² The idiom used for penetrative sex by a man as an “insertive” party (or “the top”) is “give your/his lying to” (*ntn šēkābtō/šēkābtēkā [lēzāra]*, Lev 18:20, 22–3; 20:18) or just the transitive use of “to lie with” *škb*).¹³

To “lie the lyings of a woman” (*škb miškēbē ’iššā*), understanding *miškāb* a cognate affected accusative, means to assume the position of a woman. In the expression *miškāb/miškēbē x*, the person (x) specified

in construct relationship with "lying" refers to the sexual partner(s) *opposite* to the person specified as the subject. So, those who *know* the "lying of a male" are *women* having sex with men (their partners). The "lyings" of Reuben's father refers to his father's harem (i.e., his father's sexual partners). Using these expressions as a guide, to refer to a man having sexual relations with a man, the man would need to experience the "lyings of a man," not the lyings of a woman (for other arguments that arrive at the same conclusion, see Walsh, "Leviticus," 204–5). The use of the plural of "lying" (*miškēbē*) instead of the singular (compare Gen 49:4; Num 31:18) may highlight the illegitimacy of the act.¹⁴

It could be that this sexual act between men is an "abomination" in the same way that people who act unjustly are abominations for Deuteronomy or that differing weights and unjust kingship are abominations for Proverbs or that usury, robbery, murder and other acts of social injustice are abominations for Ezekiel (Ezek 18:13; 22:2). The designation of male sexual activity as an "abomination" may be related to the Holiness view on the treatment of an Israelite, and the tradition's concern with the status of the male patriarch. Since Israelite men are not to be treated as slaves or oppressed in any way (Lev 25:17, 36–46, 53), in the Holiness worldview, for an Israelite male to submit to penetration would diminish his status and dishonor him.¹⁵ By prohibiting the oppression of Israelites, Leviticus 25 articulates the necessity of maintaining the status of Israelite males. When it comes to Lev 18:22; 20:13, just as an Israelite male may not sell his ancestral property in perpetuity (Lev 25:23), thus voluntarily forfeiting his status as an Israelite male landowner, analogously, he may not voluntarily forfeit his status as a free Israelite head of household, sexually, either. To diminish one's own status as an Israelite male with respect to gendered behavior seems to be "abominable" to at least two biblical authors (compare Deut 22:5¹⁶). One could imagine that such an idea could be extended to the resident alien class as well; they too must maintain the same decorum as Israelite male heads of households (Lev 18:26).

Another way of looking at the verse that produces a similar result is to see the "lyings of a woman" (*miškēbē 'iššā*) as explanatory of "you shall not lie with a male." The verse would then read, "You shall not lie with a male, [who is] the lyings of a woman; that is an abomination." The "lyings" (plural, not singular) of a person may refer to the person to whom someone is married. As the "lyings" of Reuben's father refer to the father's harem, so the "lyings" of a woman would be a woman's husband (Gen 49:4). In other words, the law is a prohibition on a free Israelite male having sexual relations with another male head of household because one of the two would have to be receptive.

For a free, Israelite male to put himself in the position of a woman is what is an "abomination" to the Holiness tradition. Both the Israelite

male who puts himself in that position and the man who puts the Israelite male in that position are to be executed, though perhaps as Saul Olyan argues, the original prohibition in Lev 18:22 was targeted at only one party.¹⁷ Olyan argues that the target was the “insertive” partner in contrast to myself and Walsh. The interpretation of Walsh and myself brings the Holiness Code’s law closer to Mediterranean customs, such as the taboos of the Greeks and Romans, prohibiting the sexual penetration of free males. As Walsh notes, Lev 18:22; 20:13 does not address whether or not a free Israelite may anally penetrate a slave or war captive as “the top” (208–9). Other texts acknowledge the deep social outrageousness of male penetration against resident aliens and free men in the context of rape (Genesis 19; Judges 19). The Holiness Code asserts that Canaanite men are so contemptuous of the expected decorum for male patriarchs, that they even take the position of women in sexual relationships!

Land defilement

Violating the taboos of Leviticus 18 and 20 results in what some interpreters call “moral defilement,” which is to be distinguished from “ritual defilement.” Ritual defilement happens when a person has come into contact with something impure or has a physical condition that renders them unfit to approach holy things. It comes about as a result of normal, socially expected bodily functions such as childbirth, seminal emissions, or necessary social activity such as burying a corpse. Ritual defilement must be cleansed, but it is not immoral to incur this kind of defilement, and it can be expiated by ablutions and/or offerings. Moral defilement, by contrast, comes about as a result of “immoral acts” and is a “long-lasting, if not permanent degradation of the sinner and, eventually, the land of Israel.”¹⁸ According to Jonathan Klawans, unlike ritual defilement, which can be removed through bathing or offerings, “the Holiness Code gives no indication of any methods for the removal of these [moral] defilements,” therefore “the defilement of sinners and the land by grave sin is, for all practical purposes, permanent.”¹⁹ The defilement that results from committing any of the acts in Leviticus 18 and 20 is that the land becomes permanently defiled.

There is much to commend this useful distinction between moral and ritual defilement, but the boundaries between the two may not fit into a neat, uncomplicated dichotomy. There are indications that the defilement that takes place as the result of moral offenses may not be totally permanent, and can be expiated. In particular, the repeated appeals to bloodguilt in the Holiness Code suggest that there are mechanisms to remove the defilement that comes from immoral acts, such as those described in Leviticus 18 and 20. The Holiness Code’s use of the expression “their blood(guilt) is with them” (*damêhem bām*) invokes the concept of blood retribution—the idea that crimes that incur bloodguilt can be expiated by execution:

You shall not pollute (*hnp*) the land in which you live; for blood pollutes the land, and no expiation can be made for the land, for the blood that is shed in it, except by the blood of the one who shed it. You shall not defile (*tm*) the land in which you live... (Num 35:33–4a).

Numbers 35:33–4 deals with bloodguilt that accumulates due to murder. Leviticus 20 does not deal with murder, but nevertheless uses the language of blood retribution with respect to many of the penalties:

A man who lies with his father’s wife has uncovered his father’s nakedness. They shall both be put to death. Their bloodguilt is with them (*damêhem bām*) (Lev 20:11; also Lev 20:9; 20:11–13, 16; 20:27).

Just as bloodguilt for murder can be expiated by the execution of the murderer, analogously the bloodguilt for “moral” offenses can be expiated by the execution or “cutting off” of the offender.²⁰ To put it another way, should an Israelite commit any one of the acts delineated in Leviticus 18 and 20, that person is removed from the community either by execution or by Yahweh himself who acts by “cutting off” the person, or both:

Any man among the Israelites or among the resident alien who resides as an alien in Israel who gives away his descendant as a *mōlek* child sacrifice shall be put to death. The people of Israel shall stone him with stones. And *I myself* will set my face against that man and I will cut him off from his people. For he has given away his descendant as a *mōlek* child sacrifice so that he defiled my sanctuary and profaned my holy name. If the people of the land close their eyes to the man giving his descendant as a *mōlek* child sacrifice to not put him to death, *I myself* will set my face against that man and his clan and will cut off from their people all those acting like a *zōnâ* after him, acting like a *zōnâ* after the *mōlek* child sacrifice (Lev 20:2–5).

These verses suggest that the former inhabitants of the land were not expelled simply because abominations happened to be practiced in the land, but because those abominations went unpunished. When abominations like those of Leviticus 18 and 20 go unpunished, they begin to characterize the people who commit them. These acts have become the convention (*ma’āseh*, 18:3) and customs (*huqqôt hattô’ēbôt*, 18:30) of the people who practice them. The defilement that resulted from these immoral acts was never expiated and the land became irrevocably defiled—much like the land becomes defiled as a result of murder. But these abominations can never become “convention” and “custom” if the people of Israel take action against offenders by following the remedies laid out in Leviticus 20, the chapter that prescribes the appropriate penalties for those who commit abominations.

The proper way to deal with abominations, such as the ones listed in Leviticus 18 and 20, is to remove those who commit them. Excising those who commit these prohibited acts demonstrates that the Israelites have not adopted the convention and customs of the former inhabitants of the land. In this way, the Holiness tradition approximates the viewpoint of Judges 19–21. In Judges 20, the Israelites, after hearing of the brutal rape and murder of a Levite’s concubine by the men from the Benjaminite city of Gibeah, resolve to kill the male Gibeahites, “that we may purge the evil from Israel” (Judg 20:13). The violent response has Yahweh’s approval, and the Israelites succeed in destroying the city of Gibeah (Judg 20:36–40). The acts of the Gibeahites are identified as “an outrage” (*nēbālā*, Judg 19:23–4; 20:6, 10), similar to the sexual “outrage” of Shechem in Genesis 34 and the sexual violation of Tamar by her brother Amnon (2 Sam 13:12). The text distances Israelites from such outrages in Judg 19:30, which claims that “nothing like this has happened or been seen since the Israelites came up from the land of Egypt to this day.” The Israelites also show that they, as a people, do not approve of the action when all of the Israelite men unite to go up against Gibeah (Judg 20:11).

Similarly, Leviticus 20 distances the Israelites from these “abominations”²¹ by prescribing the destruction of the people who commit them. The Holiness Code, like other legal texts in the Bible, sometimes specifies the way in which a person is to be executed (20:2, 14; 21:9). For example, when a man marries a woman and her mother, they are to be burned to death, a particularly gruesome way to die (20:14). Such brutality, like the extreme punishments of extirpation of lineage or stoning, communicates the community’s revulsion and its emphatic repudiation of the practice. Such practices will most certainly never become “convention” or “statutes” in the land of Israel.

There are three important charges that Yahweh enjoins Israel to observe in Leviticus 18 and 20, but each charge brings about different consequences:

1. Do not follow the convention and statutes of the former inhabitants (collective, 18:3, 20:7–8, 23).
2. Follow all of Yahweh’s statutes and ordinances (collective, 18:4–5, 26aα; 20:22).
3. Do not commit any of the abominations (individual, 18:24, 26aβ, 29–30).

The first two commands address Israel collectively. The first command admonishes Israel as a whole to reject the traditions of those who came before them in the land of Canaan by repudiating all of the forbidden practices listed in Leviticus 18 and 20. This is a charge for the society as a whole, and Israel obeys this command by punishing those responsible for committing abominations. The second command enjoins all Israel to follow Yahweh’s statutes and regulations in their entirety. Because Lev 19:37 says the same thing, I assume that the command to follow Yahweh’s statutes and ordinances

in Lev 18:4–5, 26aα; 20:22 refers to all of the regulations in the Holiness Code, not just Leviticus 18 and 20. The third command, in Lev 18:26aβ, addresses the *individual* Israelite, not the collective. The charge warns that any individual who commits an abomination defiles him or herself and that individual (*nepeš*) becomes subject to divine wrath (Lev 18:29).

Judging from Lev 20:3–4, the act of “cutting” a person off from his people seems to be the purview of Yahweh himself, giving him a direct role in purging offenders from the community. There are other offenses in Leviticus 20 that seem to involve divine punishment. Leviticus 20:20–1 says that if a man sleeps with his uncle’s wife or if a man sleeps with his brother’s wife, both the man and the woman will die childless. With respect to *mōlek* child sacrifice, the Holiness Code stresses that Yahweh himself will act by the use of the first-person pronoun, *’anî*: “I *myself* will set my face (*wa’ānî ’ettēn ’et-pānay*) against that man.” The offender may, depending on the offense, also be executed by his fellow Israelites, which may have the function of expiating the bloodguilt incurred by the offense, by analogy with bloodguilt for murder.

In the case of the offenses of Leviticus 18 and 20, the Holiness perspective can be compared to Ezekiel 18’s view on individual responsibility. A person who commits an offense will be punished individually: “his bloodguilt will be with him” (*dāmāyiv bô*, Ezek 18:13) and sons will not “bear iniquity” (*ns’ ba’āwōn*) for their fathers’ sins, nor will fathers “bear iniquity” for the sons’ sins (Ezek 18:20). Similarly, the Holiness Code holds individuals responsible for transgressions. They will be executed; “their bloodguilt will be with them” (*dāmāyiv bô*, Lev 20:9, *et passim*) and the individual will “bear his/her own iniquity” or sin (*ns’ ’āwōn* or *ḥaṭṭā’t*, Lev 20:19–20).

If I am correct and the Holiness Code distinguishes between collective and individual responsibility and punishment, it helps explain how the land can become defiled. If the people do not follow the prescribed remedies for individual offenders outlined in Leviticus 20, then abominations, whose effects can be expiated if the punishments in Leviticus 20 are observed, rise to the level of “custom” and “statute” (which violates the first charge to not follow the customs and statutes of the land of Canaan). When it gets to that point, *then* the land becomes defiled.

Land defilement happens in two ways. First, by not following the remedies laid out in Leviticus 20, Israelites allow the bloodguilt from abominations to defile the land. Second, when the people disobey Yahweh’s statutes, he also removes his presence (Lev 26:11–12) and their disobedience interferes with his ability to act as the sanctifier (*mēqaddēš*) of his people (Lev 20:8; 21:8). While this is not stated in the text, I surmise that a consequence of Yahweh’s decision to remove his presence is that he stops “cutting off” defiled people who commit abominations, thus eliminating a critical stopgap in the defilement and expiation system laid out in Leviticus 20. Part of Yahweh’s role as “sanctifier” for the people could be to intervene when the people are unable. For example, Yahweh could punish acts performed in secret, or he could

intervene in some cases, when people are unwilling to intervene, as in the case of inaction due to *mōlek* child sacrifices. As a result of Yahweh’s inaction, offenders will no longer bear their *own* punishment (Lev 20:17, 19), and the defilement from their actions will affect the land itself. As a consequence of the widespread proliferation of defilement, the land will vomit them out and the people, collectively, will be subject to *national* defilement (see below) (Lev 20:22). However, should they repudiate these abominations, and follow Yahweh’s statutes and ordinances, Yahweh himself can act to purge offenders from the people, when necessary (Lev 18:29; 20:3–4).

National defilement

One consequence of land defilement, besides the land vomiting the offending nation out, is that the nation itself, collectively, incurs defilement. Lev 18:24 admonishes the Israelites: “Do not defile yourselves by these things, for by all these, the *nations* which I will drive out before you have become defiled.” Lev 20:23 adds, “Do not walk in the customs of the nation that I am driving out before you, for they did all these things, therefore I was repulsed (*qûs*) by them.” The revulsion of Yahweh as well as the defilement that results from their offenses attaches to the nation itself. As a result, the Holiness tradition introduces the *nation* (*gôy*) as another entity that becomes defiled in addition to the land and the individual person who sins. Again, the author’s decision to place the former inhabitants’ statutes (*huqqōt*) in close apposition with actually doing unsavory deeds themselves (*’sh*) suggests that the nations were vomited out because their offenses rose to the level of being customary.

I would submit that no one—not even Israel—could recover from national defilement as conceptualized by the Holiness tradition. When national defilement occurs, it is a permanent condition that leads to the nation’s permanent exclusion from the land. As I suggested above, this does not necessarily mean that every, single former inhabitant no longer lives in the land. Rather, “vomiting out” and national defilement seems to mean that the former inhabitants are stripped of their social power as free men and in particular as patriarchs—i.e., landowners and heads of household. As they have shown no respect for the patriarchal family in their customs, they have become alienated from the religious life of the land as well as the ownership and wealth of the land; they are fit only to be slaves therein. Moreover, importantly, the former inhabitants have lost the privilege of being identified with the land. Because of their abominations, it is no longer “their” land, nor are they its rightful inhabitants. Its possession has passed to another, more deserving nation.

“Such a thing is not done in Israel”

Leviticus 26 provides further evidence that national defilement is a permanent condition for the Holiness tradition. The chapter, which outlines blessings

bestowed on Israel for obedience to Yahweh’s statutes and curses imposed on Israel for disobedience, cannot countenance the idea that Israelites could engage in the abominations of Leviticus 18 and 20 in the same way that the former inhabitants of the land did. To admit that Israel engaged in these offenses in the same way as the former inhabitants would be to say that Israel should be subjected to the same fate as these expelled nations: permanent expulsion. Because Leviticus 26 envisions a scenario in which Israelites could return to the land (26:40–5), the offenses that the Israelites commit that cause them to be expelled from the land are worded very carefully to distance Israelites from the offenses of Leviticus 18 and 20. Leviticus 26 does not use the words “abomination” (*tô ‘ēbā*) or “lewdness” (*zimmā*) to describe Israel’s (putatively future) sins against Yahweh, nor does there appear to be any direct reference to the offenses of Leviticus 18 and 20, with the possible exception of the word “iniquity” (*‘āwōn*), a catchall term for acts that incur the disapproval of Yahweh. The only other expression recognizable from Leviticus 18 and 20 is “I will set my face against,” which appears in Lev 26:17 in a different context, unrelated to *mōlek* child sacrifices. Instead, Leviticus 26 describes Israel’s transgressions as “sins” (*ḥaṭṭā’ōt*, vv. 18, 21, 26), “iniquity” (*‘āwōn*, v. 39–40), and “sacrilege” (*ma’al*, v. 40).

Most important, Leviticus 26 does not claim that the land “vomits out” (*qī*) the Israelites because of their iniquity. Instead, Yahweh makes the land desolate/uninhabited because of the people’s disobedience (*šmm*, 26:31, 43).²² The difference in terminology is purposeful throughout the passage, and cannot be explained as the words of a different author. The Holiness tradition, like Judges 20 and Genesis 34, and echoing Tamar’s cry (2 Sam 13:12), seems to assert that when it comes to the abominations of Leviticus 18 and 20, “such a thing is not done in Israel.” If such a thing were ever to be done in Israel by an individual Israelite, the offense can be effectively expiated by cutting that person or household off from his people and/or execution.²³ If actions such as those described in Leviticus 18 and 20 ever did take place in Israel, those who committed them are understood as deviants who would be executed or removed. Such behavior would not in any way *characterize* the people.

Instead of “abomination” (which brings *defilement* to the nation), Lev 26:21 uses the term “sin” (plural: *ḥaṭṭā’ōt*), which seems to bring about *dese-cration*, to describe *Israel’s* offenses. The Holiness tradition uses the word “sin” only one other time outside of Leviticus 26 (Lev 19:20–2) in reference to sexual relations with a slave woman pledged²⁴ to another man (Lev 19:20–2). There are a multitude of legal issues associated with Lev 19:20–2, which I will not pursue. But there is one issue here that is relevant to the use of “sin” in Lev 26:18, 21, 26: the sin committed by the offending man in Lev 19:20–2 requires a “guilt offering” (*‘āšām*). Usually, when a biblical text requires a guilt offering, the offender has committed some kind of sacrilegious act (*ma’al*)—that is, the sinner has illegitimately made something holy into something profane (desecration). The relationship between “sin”

and “guilt offering” in Lev 19:20–2 indicates that the author of Leviticus 26 chose the word “sin” to describe Israel’s wrongdoing in order to fit with the overall characterization of Israel’s transgressions as sacrilege (Lev 26:40), *not* defilement. Consequently, for the Holiness tradition, the reason the Israelites will be expelled from the land is because they have diminished their own holiness, thus profaning themselves and committing a sacrilegious offense against Yahweh, but not necessarily because they have defiled (*tm*’) themselves with the “abominations” of Leviticus 18 and 20. Apparently, it is inconceivable in the Holiness worldview for the Israelites to be able to defile themselves in the same way that the former inhabitants of the land did.

The authors²⁵ of Leviticus 26 made a decision not to use the particularly stigmatizing, vilifying rhetoric in Leviticus 18 and 20 to describe the transgressions of the Israelites. If the Holiness tradition dates to the Exilic and post-Exilic periods, which I believe to be the case, it joins the debates that took place during the periods about the culpability of Israel and the reasons for the Exile. On one side, Ezekiel fumes that Israel (collectively) has committed more abominations than the nations that came before it—more than even Sodom—and further asserts that Israel’s insufferable behavior can be traced all the way back to the time of its servitude in Egypt (Ezek 23:3, 19). Ezekiel also accuses Israelites of committing all kinds of abominations, including some explicitly mentioned in Leviticus 18 and 20, such as sexual activity with women during their period of menstrual impurity, adultery and child sacrifice (though the expression “passing children through fire” is used, not “give away your descendant for a *mōlek* child sacrifice”²⁶) (Ezek 16:21; 22:10). The Holiness tradition, on the other hand, avers that Israel has sinned and failed to maintain its holiness by disobeying Yahweh, which is certainly a grave sin and constitutes grounds for temporary expulsion.²⁷ In the debate over what Israel did wrong, the Holiness tradition stands between the extremes of Ezekiel and Jeremiah, who assert that Israel has gone beyond the pale and Lamentations which at times protests that Israel’s punishment outweighs its transgressions (Lam 2:20; 5:7, 20–2).

As culpable as the Holiness tradition believes Israel to be, it does not assert that Israel has done morally reprehensible, defiling actions that violate its sense of universal, human decency (cp. Ezek 16:58). Holiness texts reserve that vilification for Egypt and Canaan alone. In addition, not all forbidden religious practices are “abominations,” unlike Ezekiel. For the Holiness tradition, apparently, certain illegitimate religious practices that Israel committed, such as forbidden icons (*gillūlim*), fall under the category of “sin” and “sacrilege” (19:4), not “defilement”—except for necromancy (Lev 19:31; 20:27) and *mōlēk* child sacrifice (Lev 20:2–7), accusations not levied against Israel in Leviticus 26.²⁸

There is yet another difference between the portrayals of Ezekiel and Leviticus, as it relates to the characterization of Israel. According to the Holiness view, Israel deserves to be redeemed by Yahweh, at least partially

based on its own merit. Israel is inherently more virtuous than the inhabitants of Canaan and Egypt and Leviticus 26's confident prediction that Israel will repent of its iniquity is reflective of an overall belief in Israel's moral superiority. Thus, Yahweh's decision not to “abhor them to destruction” is both based on Yahweh's covenant loyalty and is justified based on Israel's more worthy conduct. Such an interpretation also supports my own theory of national defilement. For the Holiness tradition, Israel is not permanently excluded from the land because they have *not* defiled themselves and have *not* incurred national defilement, unlike the previous inhabitants.

Perhaps Leviticus 26 also provides an understanding of the rare word, “revile” (*qûš*) in Lev 20:23. On the one hand, Yahweh “reviled” the former inhabitants of the land, which resulted in their permanent expulsion. By contrast, Yahweh will not “abhor [Israel] to destruction” (*g' l lēkallōtām*) and permit them to return (26:44). These two expressions may be opposites: to revile a nation means to “abhor them to destruction” and to disembody the people from the land. Israel's wrongdoing is severe, but the overall tone of Leviticus 26 distances Israel from the most abhorrent acts, which means Yahweh may “abhor” them (temporarily), but he will not be repulsed by them (*qûš*) which would lead to their *permanent* defilement and alienation from the land.

When it comes to the redemption of Israel, again, the contrast with Ezekiel is striking. For Ezekiel, Yahweh redeems Israel only for the sake of his reputation in the eyes of the nations and emphatically not because of anything that Israel has done to deserve his salvific intervention (Ezek 20:9, 14, 22, 44). For Leviticus 26, however, Israel's ability to return is the result of the fact that they have not defiled themselves and that they repent, in addition to Yahweh's concern with his reputation and covenant.

Dietary practices

The Priestly dietary laws of Leviticus 11 give West Semitic dietary customs²⁹ an air of legitimacy by suggesting that the prohibitions are based on observations of the natural world (hoof, ruminant, fin and scale classification) and, ultimately, are rooted in a kind of cosmological knowledge of the universe.³⁰ The acceptance of these Priestly laws and their cosmological interpretation by the Holiness tradition may be related to its view that Yahweh's statutes and rulings are regulations “by which a man might live” (Lev 18:5). For the Holiness tradition, the division of the world into clean and unclean and the classifications of animals into their respective places is understood as universal knowledge that is not simply localized to Israel's society. This universalization of Israel's dietary laws and the close association of dietary laws with sexual practices expresses a common motif in the history of ethnographic caricatures of foreigners. One finds the denigration of sexual or dietary customs frequently in ethnographic literature that attacks the social customs of

alien peoples.³¹ The Holiness tradition seems to be no exception, linking what it considers to be defiling dietary customs with defiling sexual behaviors.

The Holiness tradition makes some important additions at the end of Leviticus 11.³² The avoidance of certain foods is a part of Israel’s unique ability to separate the clean from the unclean (Lev 11:43–7; 20:24–5). The command to distinguish between the clean and unclean, including clean and unclean animals in 20:25, is connected with Yahweh’s decision to separate Israel from “the peoples” in 20:24 by the verb “to separate” (*bdl*):

I am Yahweh your God, who has separated [*bdl*, Hiphil] you from the peoples. So, you will make a separation [*bdl*, Hiphil] between the clean animal and the unclean animal and between the unclean bird and the clean bird. (Lev 20:24b–25).

This passage frames the largely sexual prohibitions in Leviticus 20, unsurprisingly linking sexuality and dietary customs. Just as Yahweh “separated” Israel from the nations, so Israelites must “separate” between the clean and unclean—both sexually and in dietary matters. For the Holiness tradition, probably composed by priests, the job of imparting the divisions between clean and unclean is ultimately bestowed on the priesthood (Lev 10:10–11).

A feature of the Holiness tradition’s ideology of defilement is that it ties dietary taboos to sexual prohibitions, by using the same rhetoric of defilement for both. The Holiness tradition underscores that the consumption of “despicable things” (*šeqeš*, a Priestly term) both makes a person despicable (*šqs*, Lev 11:43a; 20:25) and defiles a person (*tm*’, Lev 11:43b–44).³³ The kind of defilement caused by the consumption of forbidden animals is very similar, if not identical, to the kind of defilement caused by the prohibitions of Leviticus 18 and 20 (see also Deut 7:26, which connects *šqs* and *t’b*). The way in which the Holiness tradition discusses the defilement that results from eating forbidden foods mimics the way in which it discusses sexual prohibitions:

Dietary laws: ^aDo not make yourselves despicable with any creeping thing (*’al-těšaqqěšû ’et-napšōtēkem bēkol haššereš*) that creeps, ^bthat is, do not *defile* yourselves by them (*wēlō’ tiṭṭammě’û bāhem*) and become *defiled* (*niṭmē’ tem*) (Lev 11:43).

Sexual prohibitions: Do not defile yourselves by any of these things (*’al-tiṭṭammě’û bēkol ’ēlleh*) for in all these things the nations that I sent out before you were defiled (*niṭmē’û*) (Lev 18:24).

Dietary laws: Do not make yourselves despicable (*lō’ těšaqqěšû*) by an animal or bird or anything that creeps on the ground (Lev 20:25).

The consumption of forbidden foods makes a person despicable (*šqs*), which is virtually synonymous, according to Lev 11:43, with defilement (*tm*’). It is

possible that the root, *šqš* functions as an alternative word for “to defile,” much like the word *hnp*, which seems to apply most often to defiled land—though see Jer 23:11 for its use with respect to human defilement.³⁴ Another possibility is that the verse is clarifying that *šqš* means *ṭm*’ because Lev 11:43b reads like a gloss. This is how I have taken it, translating the *wē-* in 43b as exegetical.

The Holiness tradition uses a variety of verbal conjugations (Niphal, Hithpael, Piel, Qal) with the root *ṭm*’, some of which seem to affect the interpretation of the root. Leviticus 11:43b and 18:24 employ both the Hithpael (a reflexive stem) of *ṭm*’ and the Niphal (a passive stem) of *ṭm*’:

lō’ tiṭṭammē’û bāhem wēniṭmē’tem (Lev 11:43b)

Do not defile yourselves (Hithpael) by [forbidden foods] and become defiled (Niphal).

’al-tiṭṭammē’û bēkol ’ēlleh...niṭmē’û (Lev 18:24)

Do not defile yourselves (Hithpael) by any of these [kinship taboos] for by all these [taboos] the nations became defiled (Niphal).

Curiously, with respect to both dietary laws and kinship taboos, both the Hithpael and the Niphal forms of *ṭm*’ communicate what would seem to be the same concept. In Lev 11:43b, the author uses the reflexive form, “do not defile yourselves by them” (Hithpael) but adds the passive form “and become defiled by them” (Niphal), an addition that seems superfluous and redundant. In Lev 18:24, a similar shift from Hithpael to Niphal appears. But 18:24 differentiates between subjects. When “you” is the subject, the Hithpael appears; when the *nations* are the subject of the verb *ṭm*’ the Niphal appears. Taking both of these verses into account, I suspect that the Hithpael and Niphal use of *ṭm*’ communicate different notions of defilement. Leviticus 18:24 fills in a subject (“nations”), whereas Lev 11:43b omits one in its successive use of Hithpael and Niphal. In both passages, the Niphal perfect seems to refer to *collective*, national defilement, whereas the Hithpael imperfect refers to an *individual’s* defilement of him or herself with either forbidden foods or the offenses of Leviticus 18 and 20 (see discussion on individual and collective defilement above). In other words, the Hithpael expresses a distributive sense of defiling oneself, but the Niphal communicates a communal sense of defilement. National defilement results in collective punishment, but individual defilement results in execution and/or individual punishment by Yahweh. All told, Lev 11:43 and 18:24 are admonishments, saying: Do not defile yourself in this way, because acts such as these put the entire nation at risk. Yet the Holiness system of defilement has a few stopgaps such as execution and, if that fails, Yahweh’s conditional intervention, which involves the removal of an offender from the community. At the same time, these verses recognize the inherently dangerous

nature of these acts and the fact that widespread commission of these offenses with impunity brings about serious, irreversible consequences.

Foreigners and religious customs in the holiness tradition

Considering that rhetoric accusing the Israelites of adopting foreign gods and foreign religious practices litters Deuteronomistic sources, it is remarkable that the Holiness tradition rarely uses this kind of alienating language to refer to forbidden religious practices, such as sacrifices to “goats,”³⁵ the construction of molten gods, cult icons, standing stones, divination and sorcery (Lev 19:4, 26, 31; 20:6, 27; esp. 26:1). The paucity of explicit rhetoric stigmatizing all religious practices as foreign is quite noticeable, considering the Holiness tradition’s willingness to characterize sexual activities, and *some* religious customs such as child sacrifice and necromancy as foreign (Lev 18:3, 24–30; 20:22–3).³⁶

The religious practices the Holiness Code does present as foreign are the *mōlek* child sacrifice, and necromancy. One prohibition on necromancy falls outside of the framing of Chapter 20 (Lev 20:27) and may have been tacked on to the chapter because it, too, was seen as something uniquely defiling (compare Lev 19:27). Milgrom argues that necromancy and child sacrifice appear in the same chapter because they both deal with ancestor worship. While I agree that necromancy could be related to ancestor worship, there is plenty of evidence here that even child sacrifices, while they are said to have been practiced by Canaanites (and Egyptians?), might be offered for Yahweh himself (and presumably the national gods of the worshiper).

Child sacrifice: for Molech, for the “King,” or a “molek” offering?

English translations of the Hebrew Bible understand child sacrifice as a religious custom offered to a god named Molech. This reading has much to support it in the interpretative traditions of the Hebrew Bible. LXX tends to understand the word *mōlek* as the proper name of a deity Moloch, though there is some variation. Inscriptional references to a *mlk* offering discovered in Punic, a cognate language closely related to Hebrew as well as Latin inscriptions referencing a *molchomor*/*morchomor* offering at Carthage suggest that the biblical *mōlek* should probably be understood as a kind of sacrifice, not a deity.³⁷

John Day³⁸ and George Heider³⁹ make the best case that the word *mōlek* refers to a deity. They both argue that the biblical *mōlek* refers to the Syro-Mesopotamian deity, Malik, a chthonic god possibly, at times, equated with the underworld god Nergal. One problem with these arguments is that most Punic references to the *mlk*-sacrifice suggest that the offerings are made to Baal Hamon or Cronus. Frank Moore Cross identifies Baal Hamon with the Canaanite chief god, El. Day disagrees

with Cross’s assertion and argues that Baal Hamon should be identified with the storm god. Regardless of who is correct in that debate, certainly neither Baal nor El are chthonic deities.

Day suggests that “Molek”/Malik is associated with the “Baal” of the Hebrew Bible (Jer 19:5; 32:35) because sacrifices to Molek take place in the context of the “Canaanite fertility cult,” which was centered on the god Baal (i.e., Hadad). Yet, the realms represented by Baal Hadad and Malik (fertility versus death) seem to be at odds. In addition, the conflict between Baal and Mot in Ugaritic texts suggests that Baal should not be associated with a chthonic deity.

The expression “act like a *zōnâ* after the *mōlek*” (*liznôt ’aḥārê hammōlek*) is a sticking point that prevents some exegetes from accepting the theory that the *mōlek* is a kind of sacrifice⁴⁰. The fact that there is no biblical expression “act like a *zōnâ* with” (*znh ’aḥārê*) a sacrifice and because it is usually employed to refer to veneration of illegitimate deities continues to prompt scholars to support the notion that *mōlek* is, in fact, a deity. Yet, a range of nouns seems to be compatible with the expression “act like a *zōnâ* with.” Aside from “acting like a *zōnâ*” with illegitimate deities and other illicit worship and religious functionaries, people can “act like a *zōnâ* with” people of other nations (Num 25:1; Ezek 16:26–8), an ephod (Judg 8:27, clearly a Yahwistic cult object), even their own hearts and eyes (Num 15:39, probably not a reference to veneration of deities).⁴¹ In addition, the terminology of “acting like a *zōnâ*” (*znh*, without *’aḥārê*) can be used to describe disobedience against Yahweh generally (Ps 73:27) as well as disobedience in matters of social justice (Isa 1:21) and diplomacy (Isa 23:17; Ezek 16; 23:3, 30).

Some suggest that child sacrifices were entreaties to chthonic deities to produce favorable outcomes for ancestors in the underworld because Yahweh was believed to have no power there. This view appears to contradict biblical texts showing that child sacrifices were offered to produce favorable outcomes *for the living*. Strangely, Milgrom is aware of these uses of child sacrifice, but still maintains that the practice was supposed to be efficacious in the underworld.⁴² The entire idea that child sacrifice was meant to placate chthonic deities—Malik or otherwise—is challenged by the fact that child sacrifice was supposed to be efficacious for living persons.

Another argument is that *mōlek* is a deliberate mis-vocalization⁴³ of the word, *melek*, which means “king” but also serves as a common epithet for a god. These child sacrifices are for “the king” who is either a deity other than Yahweh, or Yahweh himself. While I believe that, based on the Punic evidence, *mōlek* is best understood as a type of sacrifice, if this interpretation is correct, the epithet “king” can refer to Yahweh just as easily as another deity.

The use of the idiom “to profane the name” in reference to *mōlek* child sacrifice suggests that, for the Holiness tradition, they were indeed sacrifices for Yahweh. Yahweh declares that *mōlek* child sacrifice “profanes the name of Yahweh your God” (*tēhallēl ’et-šēm yhw’ ’ēlōhēkā*, Lev 18:21) and “defiles my sanctuary and profanes my holy name” (*tāmmē ’et-miqdāšī ūlēhallēl ’et-šēm qodšī*, Lev 20:3). In the Holiness Code, when Yahweh asserts that his name has been profaned, the accusation is aimed at misbehavior surrounding the worship of Yahweh himself. For example, unsurprisingly, the Holiness Code claims that improper invocation of Yahweh’s personal name either by swearing by it falsely or using⁴⁴ it in an inappropriate context (i.e., “using the Lord’s name in vain”) profanes Yahweh’s name (Lev 19:12; 24:11, 15). Importantly, however, improper handling of holy offerings, either by a priest who has profaned himself in some way or by the failure of a priest to properly “dedicate himself to the holy offerings” also results in the profanation of Yahweh’s name (Lev 21:6; 22:2).⁴⁵ Leviticus 21:6 says that the Aaronids are “holy to their God, so they shall not profane the name of their God because they make the offerings of Yahweh (*’iššē yhw’*)—the food of their God. They will be holy.” Lev 22:2 says that the Aaronids “will dedicate themselves (*yinnāzērū*) to the holy offerings of the Israelites, that they not profane my holy name because they are my holy offerings.”

While most of the actions that profane Yahweh’s name in the Holiness Code are connected to Yahweh directly, it does not claim that other prohibited religious practices, such as divination and sorcery, the forging of religious icons and standing stones, and sacrificing to goats profane the name of Yahweh. The Holiness approach to forbidden religious practices diverges from Ezekiel’s approach, which claims that all illicit religious practices, including both child sacrifice and the use of forbidden icons (*gillūlīm*) in general do profane Yahweh’s name (Ezek 20:39).⁴⁶ In the Holiness tradition, child sacrifice is the only illicit religious practice said to profane the name of Yahweh. The singling out of the *mōlek* child sacrifice, uniquely among all of the other hated religious practices, as the religious practice that profanes the name of Yahweh strongly suggests that the Holiness tradition understood child sacrifice as an illegitimate way to worship Israel’s God. The Holiness tradition sees child sacrifice as Deut 12:31 does; they are despicable acts practiced for the Canaanites’ own gods, which should not be done *for Yahweh*. Judging from the ways in which child sacrifices are used—to produce a favorable outcome for a request (Judg 11:30–40; 2 Kgs 3:24–7)—perhaps, like the improper use of Yahweh’s name (Lev 24:11, 15), child sacrifice was seen by the Holiness tradition as an illegitimate invocation of Yahweh’s power.

Necromancy involves contact with the dead, usually one’s own ancestors, and so this religious practice does not necessarily involve the invocation of other deities, either.⁴⁷ Also, Yahweh could very well be the force that allows communication with the dead.⁴⁸ However, even if Yahweh is not the force involved, Milgrom is correct to argue that necromancy is included in

Leviticus 20 because it involves the ancestors. Leviticus 18 and 20 can be loosely summarized as chapters on “family matters,” (or “kinship taboos,” see above) and both necromancy and *mōlek* child sacrifice involve religious practices that intimately involve the family. In fact, both *mōlek* child sacrifice and necromancy involve death and family members, which may be another reason both appear in close proximity in Leviticus 20, even if these religious practices do not involve chthonic deities. The condemnation of these religious practices fit within the overall theme of the chapter, which is to show that the former inhabitants of the land of Canaan acted in a way that is antithetical to what the Holiness tradition considered the proper functioning of the patriarchal household.

That the Holiness tradition is less inclined to characterize forbidden religious practices as foreign makes the fact that Deuteronomistic sources *deliberately* highlighted the foreignness of the religious practices even clearer. The Holiness tradition shows another way in which illicit religious practices could have been conceptualized: as devisings of Israel’s own mind. The Holiness tradition does not blame illicit religious practices on foreign peoples who may entice Israelites to sin; they are home-grown violations and acts of disobedience. Numbers 15, which may be a Holiness text as well,⁴⁹ demonstrates the contrast between the Holiness viewpoint and the Deuteronomistic viewpoint. Numbers 15:39 admonishes the Israelites to “remember all the commandments of Yahweh and do them. And do not seek after your own heart and your own eyes after which you acted like a *zōnâ*.” While this passage is a direct response to a story in which a man violates the Sabbath, it seems to be a window into the Holiness worldview. The biggest threat, for the Holiness tradition, is the mind of the Israelite—an Israelite’s own “heart” and “eye,” which would lead him or her to violate Yahweh’s statutes. For Deuteronomistic sources, the expression “acting like a *zōnâ* with” (*znh ’aḥārê x*) refers exclusively to illicit, usually foreign (except Judg 8:27), religious practices (Deut 31:16; Judg 2:17; 8:27, 33). Conversely, for the Holiness tradition, “acting like a *zōnâ*” can seemingly refer to all kinds of disobedience (Num 15:39), along with veneration of forbidden deities (Lev 17:7) and illegitimate religious practices, such as the *mōlek* child sacrifice (Lev 20:6).

Intermarriage

Unlike Deuteronomistic sources, which fear intermarriage with Canaanites, intermarriage with foreigners is not prohibited by any Holiness text, a conspicuous omission.⁵⁰ Considering that Leviticus 18 and 20 consider the statutes and customs of the former inhabitants extremely dangerous, the absence of a prohibition on intermarriage is curious indeed. However, if Knohl is right and Num 25:6–18; 31, stories about Israel’s conflict with Midian, are Holiness texts, the Holiness corpus contains an intermarriage polemic.⁵¹ In Num 25:6–18, Yahweh sends a plague on the Israelites because of an intermarriage

between an Israelite man and a Midianite woman. When Phineas, the progenitor of the legitimate priestly line (according to the Priestly tradition), kills the Israelite Zimri and his Midianite wife Calu, he ends the plague that Yahweh sent on the Israelites (Num 25:8).

Numbers 25 is an interesting combination of sources. On the one hand, Num 25:1–5 (possibly not a Holiness composition) highlights the foreign religious practices of the Moabites as a reason to cast aspersions on the Israelites’ social intercourse with them. But Num 25:17–18 (possibly a Holiness composition) highlights “hereditary punishment” as a rationale for disassociation with Midian. Here, Yahweh commands the Israelites to “be inimical towards” Midian (*šārôr*) because of the incident with the prophet Balaam (cf. Num 31:16). In Num 31:2–3 (Holiness), Israel’s attack on Midian is described as vengeance for past actions, but the passage does not mention their foreign religious practices. If Num 25:6–18 and Numbers 31 are in fact part of the Holiness tradition, then the negative attitude toward intermarriage also conveys some hesitancy to associate illicit religious practices with foreign people. Because most forbidden religious practices are not stigmatized as foreign in the Holiness tradition, it does not see foreigners as people who will seduce Israelites to perform banned religious practices. Instead, these Holiness texts use another rationale, *hereditary punishment*, to explain its attitude about intermarriage with Midianites. This contrasts with the non-Holiness rationale for the prohibition on intermarriage in Num 25:1–5. Notably, this Holiness text’s negative attitude toward intermarriage with Midianites is only directed at Midianites (who are, incidentally, not considered “Canaanites” in other biblical sources). There does not seem to be an explicit polemic against intermarriage with Canaanites or with other foreigners in the entire Holiness corpus.

Ethnocentrism in the holiness tradition

As one can ascertain by reading the laws in Leviticus 18 and 20, the land is very important in the Holiness conceptualization of Israelite ethnicity and it shares some important similarities with the Deuteronomic focus on the land in Deuteronomy 29 and 32. Ethnocentrism in the Holiness tradition is also tied to the idea that the people of Israel are holy and their presence on the land is connected with their ability to maintain their holiness. In some respects, the Holiness view is very similar to the Deuteronomic view that Israel is a “holy people” (Deut 7:6; 14:2, 21; 28:9) and that Israel has a unique relationship with its God, with some important differences.

By doing so a human being will live

Israel’s unique relationship with its God is expressed through Yahweh’s “statutes” (*huqqôt*) and “judgments” (*mišpāṭîm*), which Israel must follow

(Lev 18:4–5). The Holiness tradition universalizes Yahweh’s statutes and rulings as good for all of humanity because by them “a human being (*’ādām*) will live” if he does them (18:5). The Holiness tradition’s universalization in this respect is evocative of the Deuteronomic tradition, which asserts that Israel has access to laws that could make them the most wise and discerning people (Deut 4:6). The dietary laws, which come from Yahweh’s desire to separate Israel from the peoples stem from this overall universalizing tendency in both traditions. The separation between “clean” and “unclean” is not simply relevant for the Israelite, but is a statement about the cosmic order. Yet, unlike the Deuteronomic view, the Holiness tradition understands this privileged knowledge as revealed knowledge of what is pure and what is defiled, instead of “wisdom” (*ḥokmā*).

To say that Israel is the only people who truly knows the separation between holiness and profanity and impurity and purity amounts to a commentary on the religious practices of other peoples (Lev 20:24–6). Since, throughout the ancient Near East, knowledge of purity and pollution is necessary to participate in religion,⁵² and even to create religious statues,⁵³ the assertion that only Israel has access to this knowledge implies that other peoples’ religions are inferior. Similar to the portrayal of the Gutians in the *Weidner Chronicle*, but reversed, the Holiness tradition effectively claims that *only* Israel truly knows how to worship God properly. Rather than targeting a specific group, such as the Gutians, for their improper rituals, the Holiness tradition uses the idea of improper worship to effectually stigmatize all other peoples. It is hard to say whether or not the Holiness tradition promotes “monotheism,” but it is certainly clear that it sees the religions of other peoples as inherently defective.

As noted above, paired in opposition to the “convention” (*ma’āśeh*) of the land of Canaan and Israel, statutes and rulings probably refer to the customs of the people who live in the land, the way of life, or perhaps even the “culture” ascribed to the inhabitants. For the Holiness tradition, it was customary for the former inhabitants of the land to commit wanton sexual acts and sacrifice children to their own gods. Conversely, for the Israelites, it must be customary to ruthlessly punish those who commit such wanton sexual acts and child sacrifices.

Following Yahweh’s statutes and rulings has two effects: first and foremost, the statutes keep the people from polluting themselves and as a consequence, incurring the condition of national pollution, which permanently alienates them from Yahweh, who will become repulsed by them (*qûš*) and induce the land to vomit them out. Following Yahweh’s statutes also maintains the people’s holiness (Lev 11:44–5; 19:2; 20:26) so that Yahweh will continue to be present among his people (Lev 26:11–12), and act as their sanctifier (Exod 31:13; Lev 20:8; 21:8, 15; 22:9).

There is a reciprocal—or, as Milgrom put it, “dynamic”—relationship between the people’s holiness and Yahweh’s activity as their sanctifier. On the one hand, the people are not intrinsically holy, but Yahweh must bestow

that status to them in his role as divine sanctifier. At the same time, in order to retain Yahweh’s presence as a sanctifier, they must follow his statutes and “be holy.” In addition, for the Holiness tradition, the Israelites are “slaves” of Yahweh who live on his land as resident aliens and their continued residency on the land is contingent on following Yahweh’s rules (Lev 25:23, 55).⁵⁴ Some interpreters believe that there is a major difference between the Deuteronomistic conception of the people’s holiness and the Holiness conception of the people’s holiness because Deuteronomistic texts supposedly claim that the people are “intrinsically” holy, whereas the Holiness source asserts that the people must aspire to holiness.⁵⁵ I do not believe that there is a significant difference between the perspective of the two sources. Both the Holiness and Deuteronomistic traditions claim that the people must act to maintain their holiness. Deuteronomy 7 connects the people of Israel’s intrinsic holiness with the exhortation to follow Yahweh’s commands: “You are a holy people to Yahweh your God...therefore you shall keep the commandment and the statutes and the rulings which I am commanding to you today, to execute them” (Deut 7:6, 11).

Holiness and defilement as center/periphery model?

The land and its rightful possession are central to the Holiness tradition’s concepts of holiness and defilement. Before the Holiness tradition even mentions the peoples who lived on the land specifically, it draws attention to the practices of the *lands* of Canaan and Egypt. It seems as though the land of Canaan, uniquely, can be defiled by the practices delimited in Leviticus 18 and 20. Furthermore, without possession of the land, the former inhabitants are no longer a threat. The land is threatened by the forces of defilement and the people who live there are threatened by the possibility that they will not live up to Yahweh’s standard of holiness.

The consequences of not following Yahweh’s statutes and rulings for Israelites are outlined in Leviticus 26. This chapter asserts that by failing to follow Yahweh’s regulations, the people will profane themselves and Yahweh will punish them through disease, crop failure and bad harvests, as well as enemy attacks. The culmination of this punishment is that the land will be abandoned (*‘zb*) and desolate (*šmm*) and the people will be scattered among the nations—an obvious reference to the Babylonian exile. However, if they do follow Yahweh’s statutes and rulings, they will experience well-timed rains, good harvests, freedom from enemies and wild animals in addition to population growth (26:1–13). Similar to the description of the land in Deuteronomy 28 and 32, the descriptions of Israel’s blessings are idyllic and near perfect. The consequences of disobedience are just as horrific as the punishments in Deuteronomy, including the threat of foreign invasion. By contrast, however, Deuteronomy’s imagery of a faraway, barbaric nation who will threaten Israel, does not appear in the Holiness corpus.

A number of scholars have pointed out that the Priestly tradition's schema, which was adopted with modifications by the Holiness tradition, seems to assume a system of order and chaos based on the ritual life of Israel, through which the chaos of the outside is kept at bay by the rituals performed at the temple.⁵⁶ For example, the “scapegoat” ritual of the Priestly tradition, which sends the “iniquity” (*‘āwōn*) of the community into the wilderness, associates lands outside of Israel with sin. The scapegoat ritual expresses:

...the antinomy between the figures of Yahweh as the creator of a coherent, civilized world whose microcosmic model is the sanctuary. Although this world is continuously threatened by the forces of chaos and antistructure that rebel against the organizing scheme of the creator God, such forces do not properly belong to it...Israel as the “priestly nation” in the universe is called to restore the perfection of original creation by sending all physical and moral transgressions where they belong by means of the ceremony of [Leviticus] 16.⁵⁷

The Holiness tradition reinforces the Priestly worldview, by tying the correct implementation of Yahweh's statutes and ordinances to the well-being of Israel. Obedience to Yahweh's statutes and rulings creates an ideal, paradisiacal community that hearkens back to Creation, complete with Yahweh walking among his people, just as Yahweh walked with Adam.

But while sin and chaos are associated with the periphery, the *people* who are most likely to bring that kind of chaos to the community are not peoples from faraway lands, but the Israelites themselves. Even more than Deuteronomy, the Holiness tradition expresses the idea that the people who would be responsible for bringing the chaos of the periphery come from within the community. The “hearts” and “minds” of Israelites and their propensity to “act like a *zōnā*” are what threaten the idyllic, paradisiacal community and ultimately, their habitation on the land. At the same time, the Holiness tradition seems hesitant to imagine a scenario in which Israel can permanently defile itself in the way that the former inhabitants do.

It would seem that the stereotypes that the Holiness tradition imposes on the former inhabitants the land of Canaan and Egypt involve actions that affront the values of the patriarchal household. Prohibitions against incest, bestiality, sexual activity between men, sexual congress during a woman's period of menstrual impurity, *mōlek* child sacrifice, necromancy and cursing parents express expected relationships, decorum and boundaries for major actors within the household and larger clan—the men, the women, the children and maybe even the ghosts of ancestors. The people of Canaan not only committed these offenses, they had no conception that such abominable acts should be punished. The Holiness tradition also suggests that the Egyptians practiced these abominations wantonly, though there is no indication that their activity defiles the land of Egypt. Similar to the Mesopotamian texts

encountered in Chapter Three, the Holiness tradition suggests that the uncivilized and impious behavior of the former inhabitants justified their loss of political autonomy and conquest.

A major psychological component of ethnicity is its inductive potential—that is, the ability for someone to infer a great deal of actionable information from a person’s membership in a particular category. The Holiness tradition ascribes a great deal of immoral behavior to the former inhabitants of Canaan, yet the way that Holiness texts describe them raises questions about just how “inductive” this information might have been. In a number of places, it appears as though the former inhabitants of the land no longer pose any kind of threat to the people of Israel. If true, it is unclear the purpose these stereotypes and accusations served. Perhaps the Holiness tradition is making an argument about how exilic and post-exilic communities should interact with the different kinds of foreigners they might encounter.

Notes

- 1 Jan Joosten, *People and Land in the Holiness Code: An Exegetical Study of the Ideational Framework of the Law in Leviticus 17–22* (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 95.
- 2 Milgrom suggests that the mention of Egypt is supposed to allude to Ham, the infamous common ancestor of both Canaan and Egypt (Milgrom, *Leviticus 17–22*, 1537). But since Egypt, as a part of the narratological background assumed by the Holiness Source, is the land from which the Israelites came, the reference to Egypt makes sense. It is entirely possible that the Holiness tradition refers to Egypt simply because it is a part of the Exodus narrative, just as Canaan is. Consequently, reading Gen 9:21–7 into Lev 18:3 seems unnecessary.
- 3 See also comments of Gerstenberger, *Leviticus*, 247; Additionally, Michael Satlow looks at Hellenistic and Rabbinic ideas of “nakedness” (“Jewish Constructions of Nakedness in Late Antiquity,” *JBL* 116 [1997]: 429–54). I disagree with Satlow’s view that the Hebrew Bible betrays little social concern about displays of nakedness (452–3), because some biblical texts certainly seem very explicit about communicating a “social understanding” of nakedness, especially in Leviticus 18 and 20.
- 4 So, MT. According to LXX, Hanun shaves their entire beards (McCarter, *II Samuel*, 267).
- 5 Again, *pace* Satlow, “Nakedness,” 451. The issue here is not simply vulnerability but dispossession by Yahweh or behavior that characterizes a *zōnā*. Also the vulnerability communicated by nakedness is a part of the social shaming of the process of stripping and being naked.
- 6 See list in Paul Humbert, “Le substantif to‘ēbā et le verbe t‘b dans l’Ancien Testament,” *ZAW* 72 (1960): 222.
- 7 See Chapter Five, 161–2.
- 8 Humbert avers that the references to “abominations,” “aim to ensure the purity of the Yahwistic cult, above all in cultic matters” and “only concern, then, breaches of Yahwism with respect to purity and principally breaches of his cult” (my translation). His explanation that the “abominations” that do not seem to have a worship

- setting (Deut 24:4; 25:16) were taken from an older tradition that "coincided with his effort to purify the Yahwistic cult" does not seem to explain why "abominations" that take place outside the cult are considered "abominations" if the term is concerned with cultic purity (*ibid.*, 223).
- 9 The plural *tô 'ēbôt*, probably the plural of intensity, is employed here (*HALOT*, 1703).
- 10 I employ Milgrom's idea that Israel's conduct is, at times, a kind of *imitatio dei*, but unlike Milgrom, I believe that the people of Israel are already holy, not "aspiring" to holiness (*Leviticus 17–22*, 1604–7, 1740). Exhortations to the people to *be* holy (Lev 19:2) are not incompatible with the idea that they are holy (Olyan, *Rites and Rank*, 121–2).
- 11 Gerstenberger, *Leviticus*, 247–8.
- 12 Jerome T. Walsh, "Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13: Who is Doing What to Whom?" *JBL* 120 (2001): 201–9.
- 13 Milgrom, *Leviticus 17–22*, 1571.
- 14 *Ibid.*, 1569.
- 15 See inset, "Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13: A Proscription on Perceived Male Sexual 'Passivity,' p. 133.
- 16 Because religious devotion to the goddess Ishtar probably involved religious performances that included cross-dressing, Deut 22:5 may be a prohibition on this kind of cultic playacting. However, Deut 22:5 is placed within a series of laws concerning social behavior (also note Daniel Boyarin, "Are There Any Jews in the History of Sexuality?" *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 5 [1995]: 343–4, who also suggests that Deut 22:5 is a non-cultic prohibition). For examples of cross-dressing performances in the Ishtar cult, see Henshaw, *Female and Male*, 237, 292–5, comments 305–6.
- 17 Saul M. Olyan, "And with a Male You Shall Not Lie the Lying Down of a Woman," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 5 [1994]: 179–206.
- 18 Jonathan Klawans, *Impurity and Sin in Ancient Judaism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 26. I have reservations about the term "moral defilement," but use this conventional term accepted by a number of interpreters for the sake of convenience. The distinctions made by David P. Wright between "tolerated impurities" and "prohibited impurities" are also useful ("The Spectrum of Priestly Impurity," in *Priesthood and Cult in Ancient Israel* [ed. Gary A. Anderson and Saul M. Olyan; JSOT Sup 125; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1991], 150–81).
- 19 Klawans, *Impurity and Sin*, 30–1.
- 20 Which may refer to extirpation of lineage, see Donald J. Wold, "The Kareth Penalty in P: Rationale and Cases," *SBL Seminar Papers 1979* (vol. 1; ed. Paul J. Achtemeier; Missoula, Mont.: Scholars Press, 1979), 1–25; Milgrom, *Leviticus 1–16* (AB 3; New York: Doubleday, 1991), 457–60.
- 21 Not all of the actions that incur the death penalty in Leviticus 20 were mentioned in Leviticus 18. For the relationship between Leviticus 20 and Leviticus 18, see Nihan, *Priestly Torah*, 454–9.
- 22 Joosten, *People and Land*, 127.
- 23 My colleague Andrea Allgood (personal communication) has pointed out that just because Yahweh is the agent of purgation (e.g., cleansing the people of their defilement with "metaphorical" water) does not make the purification any less efficacious or "real." The "cutting off" of a person by Yahweh, then, may actually purify the land. But if Yahweh can magically purify the land through the *kārēt* penalty,

how could it ever be defiled? Again, the answer may be related to the terms “convention” and “abominable statutes.” Should these acts become customary, then the land will become defiled. Perhaps one of the ways that Yahweh “sanctifies” Israel is by removing deviants supernaturally. If Yahweh removes his presence because of their disobedience, he can no longer act as an agent that cuts off deviants from the community.

- 24 The Niphal use of the verb *hrp* appears only once, but it is clearly to be differentiated from the verb *ʾrs*, which is used only when free women are betrothed to free husbands.
- 25 Many critics believe that Leviticus 26 contains a core, composed in the pre-Exilic period and additions composed during the Exile. Milgrom argues that a Holiness redactor, who wrote during the exile composed Lev 26:1–2, 33b–35, 43–4, but that the core of the chapter (and most of the Holiness tradition) is pre-Exilic. Furthermore, Milgrom believes that Leviticus 26 represents one of three different H traditions about the Israelites’ relationship with the land and the nature of their expulsion (*Leviticus* 17–22, 1577; *Leviticus* 23–7, 2277–9, 2363–5). Harold L. Ginsburg and Levine propose a similar structure even if they disagree with Milgrom by attributing verses to the exile that Milgrom does not. In Ginsburg’s analysis, the exilic additions took place in two stages: one during the early exile (39–40a, 44–5) and one during the last days of the exile (33b–37a, 40b–43). See Ginsburg, *The Israelian Heritage of Judaism* (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary, 1982), 79–80, 100–1 n. 36; Levine, *Leviticus*, 275–81. Like Num 33:50–6, parts of Leviticus 26 claim that worship of other deities (Lev 26:1 [possibly exilic], 30) and failure to keep the Sabbath was the reason for Israel’s expulsion from the land. But there is no reference to the defiling acts of Leviticus 18 and 20, nor is there a reference to the defilement rhetoric of these chapters.
- 26 For more on the nature of the *mōlek* child sacrifice, see inset, “Child Sacrifice: For Molek, for the ‘King’ or a ‘Molek’ Offering?” pp. 192–3.
- 27 Knohl argues that Num 14:26–35, another narrative of Israel’s disobedience, is a Holiness text (*Sanctuary*, 90–2). In this pericope, Yahweh tells the Israelites that the current generation will die in the wilderness, and that only their children will enter the land because they grumbled and made complaints against him. Again, *temporary* alienation from the land for the Holiness tradition is the result of rebellion against Yahweh, not any kind of defilement, suggesting again that the Holiness tradition avoids ascribing the defilement of Leviticus 18 and 20 to Israel.
- 28 The singling out of mediums and necromancers as defiling may stem from the fact that it was a very ancient, well-established, “beyond-the-pale” taboo in Israel, said to have been banned (hypocritically) even by Saul (1 Sam 28:9). Its relationship to the family might explain its associations with the defiling taboos of Leviticus 18 and 20.
- 29 See Chapter Five, pp. 150–3.
- 30 Nihan, *Priestly Torah*, 333.
- 31 See stereotypes of the Amorite diet, linked with their generally “uncivilized,” impious behavior (Chapter Three, pp. 77–8). Greek and Roman authors not infrequently link dietary practices to sexual immorality and inability to control one’s lusts (Dale B. Martin, “Heterosexism and the Interpretation of Romans

- 1:18–32,” *Biblical Interpretation* 3 [1995]: 341–4, esp. n. 25). Philo of Alexandria ties sexual immorality to the immoderate diet of Sybarites in *Spec. Leg.* 3.43–50. The whole point of Philo’s *Special Laws* is to extol Jewish Law against other cultural traditions, and considering the connection between dietary practices and sex in the Holiness tradition, it is unsurprising that Philo would make such a link in his review of Jewish Law. On Western European appeals to sexual practices to disparage Native Americans, “orientalized” people from the Middle East, and Africans, see David E. Stannard, *American Holocaust: The Conquest of the New World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 149–246.
- 32 Knohl, *Sanctuary*, 69–70.
- 33 For the relationship between the Holiness use of these terms and the Priestly use of these terms, see Milgrom, *Leviticus* 17–22, 1763. For arguments that Lev 11:43–7 is a Holiness text, see Knohl, *Sanctuary*, 69.
- 34 See pp. 182–3.
- 35 A number of scholars interpret the reference to “goats” as “goat demons.” Milgrom suggests that Lev 17:7 is a Holiness polemic against the scapegoat ritual for Azazel, described by the Priestly tradition in Leviticus 16. Many interpreters take Azazel to be a deity of some kind, which may be true. Whoever, or whatever, Azazel might be, even if the Holiness tradition polemicizes against Leviticus 16, the Priestly ritual is not described as foreign. Azazel receives a goat, which is to be offered on account of the sins of Israel. If Milgrom is correct, Lev 17:7 targets a practice that is, according to the text, very indigenous to Israel, not a practice that is deemed to be foreign. For more speculation about what Lev 17:7 may reference, see Maciej M. Münnich, “What did the Biblical Goat Demons Look Like?” *UF* 38 (2006): 525–35.
- 36 Knohl and Milgrom suggest that Num 33:52–3, which mention hated religious practices and associate them with the “inhabitants of the land” is a Holiness composition. I disagree with this view. Much of the vocabulary in Num 33:52ff. is Deuteronomistically inspired. “Inhabitants of the land” is more popular with Deuteronomistic texts, not Holiness texts, which use “its inhabitants” (see terminological discussion below). Some words that are used for the illicit practices are more popular in Holiness texts and Holiness-like texts, e.g., “carved image” (*maskîṭ*, Lev 26:1; Ezek 8:12) but others are popular in Deuteronomistic texts, e.g., “molten image” (*massēkā*, also used in the Holiness tradition, Lev 19:4). Furthermore, the expression “pricks and thorns in the sides” as I demonstrated in Chapter Five, are common Deuteronomistic expressions (Num 33:55). The entire scenario where the inhabitants of the land are continually a threat is a scenario envisioned in the Deuteronomistic tradition. I would suggest that Num 33:50ff. is a late addition, perhaps penned by the redactor of the entire Pentateuch (not the Holiness tradition, as some argue), who combined Deuteronomistic and Holiness words and expressions.
- 37 First noted by Otto Eissfeldt, *Molk als Opferbegriff im Punischen und Hebräischen und das Ende des Gottes Moloch* (BZRA 3; Halle: Max Niemeyer, 1935); See discussion in Heath D. Dewrell, *Child Sacrifice in Ancient Israel* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2017), 11–15, 119–47 and idem, “Whoring after the *mōlek* in Leviticus 20,5: A text-critical examination,” *ZAW* 127 (2015): 628–35.
- 38 John Day, *Molech a God of Human Sacrifice in the Old Testament* (Cambridge: Cambridge, University Press, 1989).

- 39 George Heider, *The Cult of Molech: A Reassessment* (JSOT Sup 43; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1985).
- 40 Milgrom, *Leviticus 17–22*, 1556; Joosten, *People and Land*, 150. First argued by Martin Buber, *Königtum Gottes* (2nd ed.; Berlin: Schocken, 1936), 211–25.
- 41 First noted by Paul Mosca, "Child Sacrifice in Israelite and Canaanite Religion: A Study in *mulk* and *klm*" (Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 1975), 157.
- 42 Milgrom, *Leviticus 17–22*, 1771.
- 43 See Chapter Five, n. 11.
- 44 As pointed out by Kamionkowski, the root *nqb*, sometimes translated "to blaspheme" can also mean "call the name of," which is how I take it here. S. Tamar Kamionkowski, "Leviticus 24:10–23 in Light of H's Concept of Holiness" in Shectman and Baden, *Strata*, 79–80.
- 45 This would include, for the priest, a failure to maintain his holy status. In Lev 21:1–6, corpse *defilement* results in the *profanation* and defilement of the priest, which, in turn, leads to profanation of Yahweh's name (compare 21:4, 6).
- 46 In addition, other texts suggest that immoral social acts profane Yahweh's name (Amos 2:7; Prov 30:9). I do not agree with Milgrom's contention that Ezek 20:39 decries "the syncretic practice of serving YHWH with gifts and at the same time worshipping idols." For Milgrom, the Holiness Source says the *mōlek* sacrifice profanes the name of Yahweh because it wants to counteract the common notion that "Molek worship is not incompatible with the worship of YHWH." Interestingly, Milgrom did not incorporate his observation (noted by him later on 1589) that Yahweh takes credit for the "gifts" (*mattānōt*, probably children who are sacrificial victims—see Ezek 20:25–26) that Ezekiel condemns in Ezek 20:39. Because Ezekiel 20 deals with worship at "high places" (Ezek 20:28–9), it is very possible that in Ezekiel 20, the illegitimate objects of worship decried by Ezekiel are local manifestations of Yahweh (and their requisite icons/objects, Ezek 20:32), which Ezekiel thought were illegitimate for his conception of Yahweh religion. Again, in Ezekiel, much of the evidence points towards child sacrifice being a Yahwistic practice (compare Ezek 16:36).
- 47 Though, of course, "divine" language can be used in reference to ghosts ('*ēlōhīm*, 1 Sam 28:13).
- 48 In the Mesopotamian context, the sun god was often thought to be the agent by which people could contact the dead. See Brian B. Schmidt, *Israel's Beneficent Dead* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1996), 85, esp. n. 189 and Wolfgang Heimpel, "The Sun at Night and the Doors of Heaven in Babylonian Texts," *JCS* 38 (1986): 146–50.
- 49 Knohl, *Sanctuary*, 53.
- 50 E.g., Milgrom, *Leviticus 17–22*, 1584–6.
- 51 Knohl, *Sanctuary*, 96–8.
- 52 E. Jan Wilson, *Holiness and Purity in Mesopotamia* (Darmstadt: Neukirchener Verlag, 1994).
- 53 See pp. 152–3.
- 54 For discussion of the "slavery" imagery of the Holiness tradition, see Joosten, *People and Land*, 98–100, 113–4. Joosten relies on Moshe Weinfeld's observation that in Mesopotamian, Hittite, and Greek texts, the people of cities liberated by worldly kings were given to gods to serve in the gods' temples as "slaves" of the God, settled around the sanctuary on land belonging to the god.

55 Joosten, *People and Land*, 96.

56 William K. Gilders, *Blood Ritual in the Hebrew Bible: Meaning and Power* (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004), 134–5; Frank H. Gorman, *The Ideology of Ritual: Space, Time and Status in Priestly Theology* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1990), 62–102; Nihan, *Priestly Torah*, 371–5.

57 Nihan, *Priestly Torah*, 374–5.

“FOOLISH BY NATURE”

The reverberations of ethnic polemics in the Bible

Religion as primary ethnic marker

Throughout this book, I have argued that religion is an ethnic marker. It is a way in which peoples distinguish between one ethnic group and another or between outsiders and insiders. Several texts from civilizations of the ancient Near East claim that the religions of those they conquered were inferior, and that their cultural inferiors needed to be taught proper respect for the gods. In contrast to Mesopotamian texts, which make religion one ethnic marker among many, a significant number of biblical texts make religion a pre-eminent cultural marker. Religion is one thing about which Israel could claim superiority in comparison to wealthier and more militarily powerful nations.

We have encountered some scholars who see the emphasis on religion in the Hebrew Bible as an indication that “ethnic” identity is less important than “religious” identity to biblical writers. This cleavage between religious identity and ethnic identity seems untenable, especially in the ancient world. As Caroline Johnson Hodge puts it, “Ancient ethnic groups, including the *Ioudaioi* [the Jews], were affiliated with and defined by a particular god or gods. Loyalty to a deity or deities, often manifested in specific worship practices, signaled membership in particular ethnic groups.”¹ Ethnicity is a social categorization in which descent and territorial origin are significant and serve as an explanation for the “naturalness” of ethnic groups. Cultural practices, among which religion is one, are other important criteria by which people distinguish between ethnic groups. In the Hebrew Bible, the emphasis on religion is not due to the fact that “ethnic” identity has become less important to biblical writers. Rather, while biblical writers made religion *the* most important ethnic marker, they did not dissolve or undermine the significance that ethnicity held for them as a way of categorizing people. Biblical writers clearly maintain distinctions between peoples based on descent and territorial origin.

Religion rose to prominence as an ethnic marker because of Israel’s and Judah’s positions as periodic local hegemonies that were nevertheless dwarfed by other powers of the ancient Near East. Many other societies were more powerful and advanced in the trappings of “civilization” as the great empires of

the time understood them, but Israel's God has a personal, familial, connection with his people. Yahweh, as Israel's national deity, was theirs and theirs alone. Israel's unique relationship with its God, the Creator of the cosmos, fed into a rhetoric of ethnocentrism and became a basis by which to articulate the inferiority of other peoples. In the Deuteronomistic and Holiness traditions, the targets of religiously centered polemics are, primarily, the allegedly indigenous people of Canaan. These traditions also target other nations such as Egypt, Philistia, Ammon, Moab, Midian and Amalek, but these nations—in most instances—did not occupy what was considered the land of Israel. The fact that Canaanites worshipped forbidden deities and engaged in forbidden cult practices on land that belonged to Yahweh warranted their complete annihilation, according to Deuteronomistic sources. For Holiness sources, their “sexual immorality” or more accurately behavior thought to undermine the patriarchal household, warranted their dispossession.

We will now explore the reverberations that these Deuteronomistic and Holiness ideas had on other sources from ancient Israel and Judah, and some Hellenistic Jewish sources. What we will find is that this rhetoric was extraordinarily powerful, indeed. The use of religion as a way both to articulate Israel's superiority and to disparage outsiders becomes a central theme in a variety of other biblical texts that deal with foreign peoples. In this chapter I will also introduce a new way of disparaging foreigners in the Hebrew Bible, related to these Deuteronomistic and Holiness themes, commonly referred to as the “icon polemic” or “icon parody.”

Biblical icon polemics

The extremely disparaging rhetoric of the Deuteronomistic and Holiness texts tend to be limited to nearby foreigners, but other biblical sources disparage the religions of nations further away, such as Babylon. An important expression of this kind of anti-foreigner sentiment in the Hebrew Bible is the icon polemic, of which Jeremiah 10; Isaiah 44:6–18 and Psalm 115 serve as exemplars. Icon polemics ridicule the foreigner's use of religious icons, particularly statues, to represent their gods, arguing that these statues have no power. They affirm that Yahweh is the creator of the universe and that those who construct icons for their gods are uncivilized fools. Jeremiah 10 is probably the best representative of the genre:

Do not learn the way of the nations, and do not be dismayed by the signs of heaven, for the nations are terrified by them. The statutes of the nations are vapidity (*hebel*), because from wood from the forest one has cut it—a work of a craftsman's hand, with a tool. With silver and gold they will deck them; with nails and with the hammer they will fasten them so they will not totter. They are like a wrought metal scarecrow, so they will not speak. They will certainly be carried, for

they cannot take a step. Do not be afraid of them, for they cannot do harm, nor is it in them to do good. None is like you, O Yahweh. You yourself are great and with respect to strength, your reputation is great. Who would not fear you, O king of the nations? For it is owed to you. Among all the wise men of the nations and within all their realms there is none like you. They are both brutish and foolish. As for an admonition from an icon, it is a wooden thing!

Every person is brutish, without knowledge. Every smelter has been shamed because of icons. For his cast metal icon is a lie; there is no spirit in them. They are vapid, a ridiculous performance. They will perish in the time of their punishment (*pēqūdātām*) (my translation, vv. 2–8, 14–15).

Jeremiah 10 represents an early archetype for polemical views of foreigners in the Jewish literature that would follow it. The issue is no longer simply the corrupting religious practices of the Canaanites and other nearby peoples; the religious critique is more encompassing. While the polemic probably has Babylonian religion in mind, and indeed in exile, Babylonian religion would have been a greater threat than Canaanite religion, the polemic implies that *all* non-Yahwistic religion is inferior. The text spells out the superiority of Israel’s God and the inherent inferiority of the religion of foreigners by showing contempt for the statues that represent foreign gods.

As discussed in Chapter Four, biblical traditions such as the Deuteronomistic tradition assumed that other gods existed, that they had their own power, but that they were under the authority of Yahweh (Deut 32:8–9). It has been long recognized that Jeremiah 10 parodies the construction and consecration of religious statues in Babylon, a process known as the *mīs pî* ritual.² Texts describing the *mīs pî* ritual trace the elaborate series of purification rites and incantations the statue receives as it travels from the metallurgist’s workshop to its enthronement in a temple. The ritual ordeal “activates” the statue and transforms it from the work of a mortal craftsman into a host for the presence of the immortal god it represents. No statue can house the presence of a god without authorization from the gods, especially the hierarchically superior gods such as Anu, Enki, Marduk and the Anunaki. The whole point of the *mīs pî* ritual is to show that the creation of the statue has truly been commissioned by the gods and is not simply a work of human hands. Biblical icon polemics essentially declare that the ritual is ineffectual and that the statues that the foreigners have created possess no power.

It is unclear whether Jeremiah 10—which may or may not have been composed by Jeremiah the prophet³—claims that statues in and of themselves have no power or that these statues have no power because Yahweh has rendered them powerless. Is it that Jeremiah 10 rejects the idea that statues can be a conduit for a divinity’s “presence” *per se*, or is it that the statues of

foreigners have no power because Yahweh has defeated the foreign gods they represent? Most likely, Jeremiah 10 assumes the latter. As Nathaniel Levto points out, Jeremiah 10, Isa 44:6–20 and Psalm 115 appropriate the rhetoric that surrounds a conquering king’s destruction or abduction of his enemy’s religious icons.⁴ The destruction or abduction of statues of deities by a conqueror, communicates the superiority of the conquering society’s gods over those of the conquered. The precise “theological” backstory used to interpret the conqueror’s actions may vary. In some instances, the king would kidnap the statue and place it in the temple of the conquering nation’s national deity, an action communicating that the vanquished people’s god had sided with the conquering nation’s god. In other instances, kings would boast that they destroyed statues thereby “killing” the gods they represented. Neo-Assyrian king Aššurbanipal (668–627 BCE) bragged that in his defeat of the Elamites he “smashed their gods, and soothed the heart of the lord of lords [Aššur]. I wiped the sanctuaries of Elam out of existence; I counted their gods and goddesses as phantoms.”⁵

In another passage, cited by Levto, the conquering king boasts of his ability to render the enemy’s gods as “nothingness” or “phantoms.” Levto notes that Aššurbanipal’s act of destruction:

...denies the cults and gods of Elam not simply their power but their very existence...placing the gods of his enemies into the realm of mortals, claiming they are like ghosts of dead humans. Assurbanipal thus turns the Elamite gods into something quite similar to what Babylonian cult images become in Israelite icon parodies: They are vacuous, without substance and there is no life in them; they are not gods.⁶

Defeated peoples often had their own interpretations for the destruction or capture of their statues. For example, the so-called *Marduk Prophecy* reinterprets various instances in Babylonian history—before Nebuchadnezzar I (1125–1104 BCE)—in which the statue of Babylon’s national god was captured by enemies.⁷ The text contends that Marduk was not defeated; he decided to travel to the nations that kidnapped his statue entirely of his own volition. When Marduk’s icon returned to its rightful place in his temple, Esagil, that too was Marduk’s decision. Judahites may have also been subjected to icon polemics, as some passages mention that foreigners mocked them by disdaining Yahweh’s power (2 Kgs 18:32b–35; Ezek 36:2–3, 15, 19–23; Psa 115:2; 137:3; 2 Chr 32:17). Unsurprisingly, biblical writers had their own explanations for Israel’s defeat, the destruction of their temple and the capture of holy objects from the sanctuary. Israel’s sinfulness caused Yahweh to punish them in this way.⁸ Ezekiel dramatically illustrates how Yahweh’s presence left his own icon in Jerusalem voluntarily due to the sinfulness of the people, showing that Yahweh was certainly not defeated. Rather, he abandoned his people in anger (Ezek 10:18–22).

In the icon polemics of the Hebrew Bible, it would appear as though Yahweh himself has affected the conquest of rival gods, not a human king. If true, the scenario converges with Deuteronomy’s particular ethnocentrism, which locates Israel’s superiority almost entirely in wisdom and cosmic knowledge, expressed most poignantly through their religious devotion to their God (Deut 4:6–8). Yahweh’s primary realm is the heavens and his activity takes place on a cosmic, largely invisible level—invisible to everyone except his people who happen to be “in the know.” This rhetoric asserts that the activity of Israel’s God does not manifest itself in the same way that other nations might expect a god to behave. As Psalm 115 puts it:

Why should the nations say, ‘Where is your God?’ *Our* God is in the heavens. He does all that he pleases. *Their* creations (‘*āṣabbēhem*) are silver and gold, a deed of human hands...The heavens are Yahweh’s heavens but he has given the earth to humanity” (Emphasis added, Psa 115:2–4, 16).

Again, in the polemics of the prophets, biblical authors overcome Israel’s apparent weakness by locating its strength in Yahweh, who exercises great power in the heavenly realm. Judah may have suffered defeat in an earthly war, but on a cosmic level in which the gods are engaged in conflict, Yahweh asserts his superiority over other national gods.

As a number of commentators on Jeremiah 10 have also pointed out, a cosmic drama rages in the background of the chapter. The passage alludes to some kind of defeat of rival gods. Jeremiah 10:11 recites an Aramaic aphorism proclaiming that, “The gods who did not make the heavens and the earth shall perish from the earth and from under heaven.” Verse 15 adds that “they will perish in their time of punishment,” probably a reference to the gods represented by the statues,⁹ not the craftsmen who make them or just the material statues themselves. In the cosmic drama assumed by Jeremiah 10 and probably also Isaiah 44, Yahweh has defeated his cosmic rivals and rendered them powerless in the earthly realm, including most importantly, through their cult statues—these gods have “perished from the earth.” Because Yahweh has vanquished these gods, the icons that are supposed to host their presence are as useless as vapor, with no spirit in them. How, exactly, these rival gods have “perished” is unclear, as Jeremiah 10 does not provide any details of the cosmic drama. Psalms 82:1–2, 6–8 may provide some further insight:

God has taken his position in the Council of El (*ādat ’ēl*). In the midst of the gods he will pass judgment: ‘How long will you judge iniquitously and show partiality to the wicked?...I myself have said you are gods and all of you are children of the Most High (*bēnē ’elyôn*). However, like a human being you all will die, and like one of

the princes you will fall.’ Arise, O God and judge the earth. For you yourself will possess [as inheritance] all the nations.

This passage can be seen as an inversion of Deut 32:6–8, which says that Yahweh (*‘elyôn*) has *bequeathed* (*hanḥēl*) the nations to the gods, but has taken Israel as his own inheritance (*nahālā*). In contrast, the author of Psalm 82 asks Yahweh (*‘elōhīm*) to *possess as inheritance* (*tinḥal*) all the nations and declares that other gods will die just like mortals. The optative tone of the author in verse 8 (“Arise, O God”) suggests that things are currently different from the way that the author wishes them to be and that the author is hopeful that these gods will be deposed in the future. Verses 2–4 present a scene in which the gods have neglected their duties to institute justice on the earth, so Yahweh revokes their power in verses 6–7 and in verse 8 he inherits the nations they have forfeited. The references to the death of gods (*tēmūtūn*, Psa 82:7) and their perishing (Jer 10:11, 15) recalls the Neo-Assyrian passages above. Neo-Assyrian kings boasted that they “killed” their enemies’ deities, but in Psa 82:7–8 and Jer 10:11, 15, the gods have been “killed,” presumably, by Yahweh. The statues that represent them are now like the phantoms and non-existent things that the Neo-Assyrian kings created by capturing or destroying cult icons. Many myths from the ancient Near East tell stories of gods who died. Baal (Hadad), the Canaanite storm god, Inanna/Ishtar the Mesopotamian goddess of gender and love, and Marduk himself underwent trials in which they “died” by descending into the underworld.¹⁰ Marduk’s case is of particular importance because interpretation of his foray into the underworld seems to reflect political tension between Assyria and Babylon.¹¹ Battles between the gods can take on a nationalistic, and perhaps even ethnic tone. Different nations use mythological imagery to claim that their national deity is greater than all the others, and especially greater than the national deity of a rival or threatening society that claims that their god is the one who is supreme.

The rhetoric of the anti-icon passages of the Hebrew Bible is more political than philosophical. They make forceful, absolute statements about who *rules* in heaven and earth as opposed to who *exists* in heaven and earth.¹² Jeremiah 10; Isa 44:6–20 and Psalm 115 are not treatises on “monotheism,” but assert that it is Israel’s God who has both created the cosmos and rules it as king—not Babylon’s national god, or any other nation’s chief god. Creator gods formed and ruled over the structure of the universe. These national gods also authorized the imperial rule of the nations with which they were identified and the monarchs who ruled them. Assyria and Babylon could claim to be more powerful than ancient Israel, but because of their inferior religious practices, Jeremiah 10 exclaims, they were actually foolish and indeed “brutish”—earthly appearances notwithstanding.

The passages ridicule the powerlessness of these foreign religious statues, but the “nations” who turn to them are not simply ignorant. Rather, they do

not know better, even though they *should* know better. The author asks, “who would not fear you?” and argues that this fear is owed (*y’h*) to Yahweh (10:7). Jeremiah 10’s accusations of insolence are reminiscent of Neo-Assyrian texts which portray enemies of the state as rebellious against Assyria’s national god. The refusal of these nations to recognize Israel’s God, as the rightful Lord and King is analogous to the political impiety displayed by the enemies of the Neo-Assyrian kings. For the Assyrians, the king and his military are the instruments of the national god’s wrath. In biblical prophetic texts known as “Oracles against the Nations,” Yahweh himself employs different means to judge and punish nations who do not recognize his authority (Isaiah 13–23; Jeremiah 46–51 [MT]; Ezekiel 25–31). Later Jewish authors will envision a human (or human-like) figure—a Messiah—as an instrument of the God’s sovereignty on earth (Dan 7:13–14).

The verb translated “to be brutish” (*b’r*) appears to be a denominative verb related to a word for male cattle (*bē’îr*, Gen 45:17; Exod 22:4; Num 22:4, 8, 11; Psa 78:48). Psa 73:22 cements the root’s relationship to animalistic behavior: “I was brutish (*ba’ar*) and was unknowing. Like a beast (*bēhēmôt*) I was toward you.” I suspect that this word is used in Jeremiah 10 because it communicates both power, on the one hand, and foolishness, on the other. Male cattle (*par*, *’abbîr*), and sometimes female cattle (Amos 4:1) can represent powerful people.¹³ The root’s relationship to power also appears in Ezek 21:36 [ET 21:31], where it is paired with the destructiveness of foreigners, who will serve as instruments of Yahweh’s indignation: “I will deliver you into the hand of brutish men (*bō’ârîm*), ones skilled in destruction.” The root’s appearance with words for foolishness, its animalistic undertones, and its association with power make it a good choice for the author to communicate the foolhardy impudence of more powerful foreign nations. It also seems to be a way of claiming that that foreign nations are uncivilized and barbaric. The use of animal language to describe the mental faculties of foreigners recalls the portrayal of the Gutians in Chapter Three, as a people with “canine intelligence.”

The potency of polemical texts against ethnic foreigners in Deuteronomistic and Holiness texts is evidenced in the influence they had on later Jewish and Christian writers. In the centuries after Deuteronomy and the Holiness Code were penned, the ideas contained in these writings took on a life of their own among writers who held the Bible to be sacred. The Canaanites, and other disparaged groups such as the Amalekites, Ammonites and Moabites became a prototype by which other foreigners were judged and excluded from the Jewish community. In Second Temple period and beyond, likening foreigners to the Canaanites, or another disparaged ethnic group in the Hebrew Bible, such as the Ammonites, Moabites or Amalekites was a way to impugn the moral character of that ethnic group or to justify and explain a hostile relationship between Jews and certain foreigners. This tendency also seems similar to Neo-Assyrian texts that marshal the ancient imagery and epithets used

against Gutians to disparage contemporaneous groups that cause problems for the Assyrian king.

In the Hellenistic period, biblical icon polemics like Jeremiah 10 also serve as a kind of template for attacks against foreigners. Idolatry becomes the central focus for Jewish writers who sought to articulate the difference between their people and other peoples. Hellenistic Jewish authors went a step further by combining the icon polemic with the religious and ethical invectives against the Canaanites found in the Hebrew Bible. That is, Jewish writers who disparaged Gentiles linked unethical behavior—particularly sexual immorality—with idolatry. This can be seen as a creative merging of the themes and language found both in Deuteronomistic and Holiness traditions for a new era. The former focused on the religious transgressions of the Canaanites, while the latter focused on the sexual immorality of the Canaanites.

In the remainder of the chapter, we will look at Second Temple period Jewish texts that seem to recast Deuteronomistic, Holiness and anti-icon rhetoric in their polemics against ethnic foreigners. In keeping with this book’s theme of ethnic foreigners in the Bible, the survey is limited to certain canonical and deuterocanonical texts. Judith, Ben Sira and Wisdom of Solomon, three books that will be surveyed below, were once considered sacred texts to Jews because they were a part of the Septuagint. Today they are neither a part of the Jewish Tanak, nor the Protestant Bible but are considered Scripture for Roman Catholics and Orthodox Christians. Lastly, we will look at some of the rhetoric about foreigners by the Apostle Paul, specifically in his letter to the Romans. Other major Hellenistic Jewish works, e.g., the writings of Flavius Josephus, Philo of Alexandria, the book of Maccabees, will be mentioned if they illuminate passages in the texts I have selected. Of course, these later Jewish compositions are rich with different sentiments about foreigners, so we will be most attentive to compelling points of contact between the themes in Deuteronomistic texts, Holiness texts and icon polemics.

Persian period

An early example of the afterlife of biblical xenophobia appears within the Hebrew Bible itself, in the post-exilic book of Ezra–Nehemiah. The book separates the people Israel (Ezra 2:2), simultaneously referred to as the “sons of the exile” (*bēnē haggōlā*) and “Israelites” (*bēnē yisrā’ēl*), from foreigners, designated by various terms based on the root *nkr*.¹⁴ The conceptualization of “Israel” as an exile community, coming from a faraway land that can be distinguished from the “peoples of the lands” shows that the authors understand Israel and the foreigners to be ethnic groups. Geographic space, residency on the land and genealogy recur as important themes in defining Israel and not-Israel the book. Though the exile was a temporary event in Israel’s history, the experience of being in another land and returning differentiates the

community of “Israel” from those who live in the land currently. Additionally, in Ezra 2, the author takes pains to demonstrate that those who live among the Israelites in their respective “towns” have legitimate genealogical credentials (especially 2:59–63, 70).

Ezra 9–10 and Nehemiah 13 explicitly draw upon Deuteronomy and the Holiness Code to make their arguments about the exclusion of foreigners from the Judean community in the period after the exile. Ezra 9:1 exclaims that the Judean community who was returning from their exile (*gôlâ*) in Babylon cannot intermarry or have any social intercourse with the “peoples of the lands” because they practiced abominations (*tô‘ēbôt*). These abominations are like those of “the Canaanite, the Hittite, the Perizzite, the Jebusite, the Ammonite, the Moabite, the Egyptian and the Amorite.” Ezra condemns his compatriots’ interethnic unions not because the non-Judeans they married were “actually” Canaanites; rather they were *like* the Canaanites because their behavior was supposedly similar—i.e., they practiced similar abominations. Ezra’s use of *tô‘ēbâ* (“abomination”), a word commonly used by the Holiness Code to describe offenses of the previous inhabitants of the land, is not accidental. The author of Ezra 9 purposely invokes the Holiness Code to argue that Judeans cannot intermarry with outsiders in his own time. The foreigners Ezra 9–10 references are not actually Canaanites, but they are cast in the light of Canaanites so that the author can condemn intermarriage between Jews and these peoples.

Nehemiah 13 draws on the negative sentiments against Ammonites and Moabites in Deut 23:8–9,¹⁵ a text that forbids Ammonites and Moabites from joining the Israelite community (literally phrased as entering the “community of Yahweh”), while permitting Egyptians and Edomites to join. Nehemiah 13 appeals to Deut 23:8–9, a text that does not address some of the foreigners mentioned in this chapter (e.g., Tyrians, Ashdodites, Neh 13:16, 23), to oppose intermarriage between Judeans and these foreigners. Ezra–Nehemiah is picking up on a precedent already established by earlier biblical material. Like Deuteronomistic and Holiness texts, which use a bygone past filled with immoral and idolatrous Canaanites to both stigmatize indigenous religious practices with which they disapproved and to marginalize those around them identified as “Canaanites,” so later texts use this “Canaanitizing” rhetoric to stigmatize local outsiders and to compel conformist behavior among Judeans.

Judith

Judith, which was probably composed around 100 BCE¹⁶ tells the story of a military campaign by an evil Assyrian general named Holofernes, on behalf of Nebuchadnezzar, king of the Assyrians (yes, that is what the text says; more on that below) against the Jews. After Holofernes conquers the surrounding areas and intimidates the Levantine nations surrounding the Jews into submission, the Jews, the only people to resist, take their last stand at a most

likely fictional town called Bethuliah. On the one hand, the book portrays one foreigner, Achior the Ammonite in a positive light. On the other hand, the text depicts Nebuchadnezzar, Holofernes, his entourage, and all of the other surrounding nations of the Levant, extremely negatively.

Judith contains many parallels and similarities to other biblical stories and also appropriates some literary hallmarks of Hellenistic era historiography.¹⁷ The book is so clearly ahistorical, though, that some modern commentators believe that the author intentionally wrote a fantasy replete with symbolism. The symbolism is evident even in the narrative’s allusive character names and fictional locales. The name Judith itself, which means “Jewess,” is painfully obvious. The author knew biblical history and so calling Nebuchadnezzar an Assyrian king who ruled from Nineveh, which is clearly wrong, is probably no accident. The author merges two major enemies responsible for levying massive destruction against Israel in the past—Babylon and Assyria—into one fantastic supervillain who embodies the memory of both. The use of the Assyrians as a symbol for terrible foreigners may have been popular. The wicked city against which Jonah was called to prophesy was Nineveh, and Judith seems to make an allusion to the book of Jonah, suggesting some familiarity.¹⁸

Through its ahistorical symbolism, Judith continues the tradition of using Israel’s past relationship with foreigners to interpret its relationship with contemporaneous foreigners. Notably, Judith expands the category “Canaanite.” In Chapter Five, we learned that Moab, Ammon, Edom, the Philistines and some coastal peoples such as Tyrians and Sidonians were not typically considered “Canaanites” in Deuteronomistic texts. In Judith, however, Holofernes refers to Ammonites, Moabites and other Levantine peoples¹⁹ as “sons of Canaan” (*huioi Chanaan*, 5:2–3), whereas Achior the Ammonite points out that the Israelites originate from Mesopotamia, not Canaan (5:6–9). The appellation “Canaanite,” which already demonstrated some flexibility in Deuteronomistic texts, has expanded in Judith to encompass all of the peoples surrounding the Jews, even some, such as Moabites, who were previously excluded from the category (Deut 2:8–9). Perhaps the fact that the reference to “sons of Canaan” comes from Holofernes is designed to draw attention to his ignorance about the region. After all, Holofernes does not know who the Israelites are until Achior tells him about their history. While possible, the words put in Holofernes’s mouth likely show that the author presents all Levantine peoples who are not Jews as “Canaanites.” A thumbnail sketch of Israel’s history narrated by Achior, which immediately follows Holofernes’s reference to the “sons of Canaan,” references the land of Canaan repeatedly, suggesting the author juxtaposes “Canaan” and “Israel” deliberately in Chapter 5.

The use of “sons” + *place name* seems to be the main way that the book of Judith refers to foreigners. The construction designates the Assyrians (“sons of Assyria,” 7:17), the Edomites (“sons of Esau,” 7:8, 18), the Ammonites (“sons

of Ammon,” 5:5), and of course the Israelites (“sons of Israel”). Without getting into the thorny question of whether there was an original Hebrew text of Judith, this “sons of” construction is clearly borrowed from the rhetoric of the Hebrew Bible (*bēnē + place name*). And like most instances in the Hebrew Bible, it probably serves as an idiom of ethnicity in Judith because it combines both a word that references descent and a word that references geographic space. Because “sons” + place name is not enough to conclude that Judith portrays non-Jews as ethnic groups, the “sons of” construction should be read in conjunction a few other words appearing in the book, which do suggest that the author is working with a concept of ethnicity. In Holofernes’s rage against Israelites for their rebellion, he refers to them as a *genos* (6:5)—a term that more specifically refers to descent. 7:8 refers to the Moabites as a “people” (*laou Mōab*) and 7:10 refers to Israel as a people (*laos houtos tōn huiōn Israēl*). The use of both “race” and “people” along with “sons” (*huios*) to refer to Israel suggests that the terms are closely related and that the word “people” (*laos*) in Judith, is also an ethnic term.

The book employs gentilics in addition to these other expressions of ethnic peoplehood. The text calls the Ammonites the “sons of Ammon” in 5:5, following a custom in the Hebrew Bible of referring to the Ammonites as the “sons of Ammon,” but uses the singular gentilic “Ammonite” (*Ammnonitēs*) to describe Achior once. 5:16 lists the gentilics for the peoples who were driven out of the land: the Canaanites, the Perizzites, the Jebusites, the Shechemites and the Girgashites. The appearance of the gentilic, “Canaanite” in the same chapter in which the expression “sons of Canaan” appears is interesting. It may show that, as in the Hebrew Bible and LXX, authors can use both the *sons + place name* construction in some instances and the gentilic in other instances, but show no real difference between the two ways of denoting ethnic origins. One final terminological reference to foreigners appears in 4:10, in which “resident aliens” (*paroikos kai misthōtos*²⁰) along with wives, children, slaves and even animals dress in sackcloth for petitionary mourning. Judith follows the biblical pattern of placing the resident alien among the dependants of Israelite men.

Not unexpectedly, and in keeping with longstanding themes in biblical portrayals of foreigners, the book of Judith notes that Israel is weak in comparison to world powers, and affirms that Israel’s God is the source of its superiority. Achior warns Holofernes that if he attacks the Israelites, then God “will protect them and we will be a disgrace before all the world” (5:20). Later, Judith also notes in her prayer that Israel’s power resides in its God, whose “strength does not depend on numbers” nor whose “might depends on the powerful” (9:11). Right after Achior warns Holofernes, the surrounding Levantine peoples disregard his admonition, calling Israel “a people with no strength or power for making war” (5:23). In contrast to Israel’s perceived weakness, the foreign enemy boasts in his strength (9:7–10) to the point in which he displays profound insolence towards God. Nebuchadnezzar destroys

the religious icons of those he conquered in the region in order to “destroy all the gods of the land, so that all nations should worship Nebuchadnezzar alone, and that all their dialects and tribes should call upon him as a god” (3:8). The Jewish audience hearing Judith knows that there is only one true Lord of the Earth (9:12) and so Nebuchadnezzar, the self-described “lord of the earth” (2:5; 6:4; 11:1, 7) seeks to supplant God himself.

The depiction of Judith’s Nebuchadnezzar is artfully preposterous. Both Babylon and Assyria possessed national gods to whom their kings gave credit and who they consulted before battle. Mesopotamian kings typically kept temples intact and when they did destroy them or capture religious statues, it was not to create a cult for themselves, but to assert the superiority of the national god. Nebuchadnezzar’s actions would be outrageous, even for a Mesopotamian king. But the exaggeration serves a purpose in that it highlights the refusal of the foreign king to recognize the sovereignty of the God of Israel, participating in a tradition of portraying foreigners as insolent in the face of God’s rule. The portrayal also more closely fits Seleucid kings, such as Antiochus IV Epiphanes, who reportedly promoted an eccentric cult of personality and did in fact seek to undermine the religious life of the Jews in his aggressive Hellenization program.

All of the peoples neighboring Israel conspire with the Assyrians, and notably they try to weaken Israel by cutting off their water supply in the highlands (7:8–19). They also boast that their plot will cause Israel to “melt away with hunger” (7:14). The Moabites and Edomites hatch the plan to cut off the water supply and the Ammonites help the Assyrians actually do the deed. As discussed in Chapter Four, the Deuteronomistic tradition considers the decision of Ammon and Moab to withhold food and water from the Israelites during the conquest of Canaan to be beyond the pale, and Deut 23:4–7 [ET 23:3–6] permanently excludes them from the community as a consequence. Edom also shows inhospitality to Israel (Num 20:14–21; Judg 11:17–18), though Deut 23:4–7 does not exclude them permanently. Consequently, the reappearance of these three nations around the “food and water” theme in Judith may be purposeful.

One particular stereotype of foreigners stands out in Judith: sexual immorality. The idea that sexual immorality characterizes certain foreigners appears throughout the Hebrew Bible (Genesis 19; Genesis 34), but most straightforwardly manifests itself in the Holiness Code (Leviticus 18; 20). It will continue to be a prominent theme in the Jewish literature that disparages foreigners throughout the Hellenistic period. The narrator sets the tone when he frames Judith’s plot against the Assyrians using the Rape of Dinah, a story that involves the sexual violence of a particular Canaanite group, the Shechemites (Genesis 34; Jdt 9:2–3). Judith’s beauty so enraptures the Assyrians, and especially Holofernes, that they foolishly allow her into their inner circle, thereby illuminating their own sexual immorality. The words used to describe Holofernes’s reaction to Judith’s beauty show that his

passions have been aroused and his rational mind has stopped working. His heart “went crazy” (*existēmi*) and his mind “shook” at her sight (12:16). In Judith’s celebratory song at the end of the book she sings that her sandal seized his eyes, and her beauty took his mind (*psychē*) captive (16:9). The narrative clearly offsets Judith’s sexual continence in her widowhood against Holofernes’s sexual incontinence. His lack of self-control leads to his own destruction (13:16) whereas Judith’s sexual self-restraint (12:17) helps deliver victory to her people.

Other recurring biblical features distinguishing Jews from non-Jews such as food laws, wisdom and circumcision also crop up in the book. Like Daniel and Tobit, when Judith enters the camp of Holofernes, she makes special arrangements so that she can keep Jewish dietary laws (12:2–3, 9; compare Dan 1:8–17; Tob 1:10–13). The book also portrays Judith as the embodiment of wisdom, something that Deut 4:5–8 claims distinguishes Israel from other nations. Holofernes and his servants “marveled at her wisdom” with the Assyrian general remarking, “no other woman from one end of the earth to the other looks so beautiful and speaks with such understanding” (11:20–1). The compliments of Holofernes’s court are ironic because Judith is setting a trap for Holofernes. After Judith beheads Holofernes and the Israelites beat back the Assyrians, Achior joins Israel’s polity and circumcises (14:10). Ammonites, as a West Semitic people, may have circumcised anyway (Jer 9:25–6), and so the narrative presents another instance in which an ahistorical detail has been inserted to make a theological and cultural point.

Ben Sira

Ben Sira, known as Ecclesiasticus in the Roman Catholic Bible and Wisdom of Sirach in the Orthodox canon, was probably first composed in the early second century BCE.²¹ Versions of Ben Sira appear in both Hebrew and Greek, but the full text appears only in Greek. Scholars classify Ben Sira as part of the wisdom genre of biblical literature, akin to Proverbs, Job and Qohelet (Ecclesiastes). These books give general advice about proper living, human nature and the natural world, all of which operate according to largely observable principles established by God.

Ben Sira extols the Jewish (or Judean) wisdom tradition, but there is debate among scholars about how much of this work targets a perceived encroachment of Greek culture into Jewish life.²² There are no clear references to Greeks in the entire book, but Ben Sira addresses other named foreigners in a few places. Ben Sira’s main focus is on the benefits of wisdom. Yet, despite the seeming universality of wisdom, Israel has a closer relationship to it than all of the other nations. In this way, Ben Sira recalls Deut 4:5–8.²³ Ben Sira expresses Israel’s unique relationship with wisdom in Sira 24, where lady Wisdom, understood as a divine female creature, proclaims that she sent her

presence to dwell in Israel. Ben Sira merges an important symbol in wisdom literature, the praise of lady Wisdom in Proverbs 8, with the ethnocentric outlook of Deuteronomy:

Wisdom praises herself and boasts in the midst of her people (*laos autēs*). In the assembly of the Most High (*hypistos*), she opens her mouth. Before His divine beings, she boasts: I came forth from the mouth of the Most High and like fog covered the earth.

“Upon the waves of the sea, and in all of the earth, and among every people (*laos*) and every nation (*ethnos*), I have taken up a possession.²⁴ Among all these I sought a resting place; in whose inheritance (*klēronomia*) should I live? Then the Creator of all things commanded me; the One who created me rested my tent. And he said, ‘Make your dwelling in Jacob, and in Israel claim your inheritance (*kataklēronomeō*).’ Before the ages, in the beginning He created me, and for all time I will not cease to exist. In the holy tent, I ministered before Him and thus I was established in Zion. In the beloved city He, likewise, rested me; and in Jerusalem is my domain of authority. I was rooted in an honored people—in the portion (*meridi kyriou*) of the Lord, His inheritance (*klēronomia*).

“The one who obeys me will not be put to shame; and those who work with me will not sin. All of this is in the book of the covenant of the Most High God, the law that Moses commanded us as an inheritance (*klēronomia*) of the congregations of Jacob (Sira 24:1–3, 7–12, 22–3).

The prominent reference to inheritance suggests familiarity with the notion of apportionment and inheritance found throughout the Deuteronomistic tradition.²⁵ In particular, there are important ideational and thematic connections with Deut 32:8–9. Inheritance (*klēronomia*), appears prominently in this passage, as it does in Deut 32:8–9. Other words seem to connect Sira 24 to Deut 32:8–9, such as the divine epithet “Most High” (*hypistos*). Though the epithet appears commonly in Ben Sira, its concentration here, three times, in conjunction with the cosmic setting seems deliberate. The references to Jacob and the use of “people” and “nation” also link the two passages. Lastly, *meris kyriou*, used in Sir 24:12, translates the Hebrew expression *hēleq yhwē* (“portion of Yahweh”) in Deut 32:9:

When the Most High (*hypistos*) separated the nations (*ethnos*), as He separated the sons of Adam, He set the boundaries of nations (*ethnos*) according to the angels of God. And the portion (*meris kyriou*) of the Lord became His people (*laos*) Jacob, the allotment of His inheritance (*schoinisma klēronomias*) was Israel (Deut 32:8–9 LXX).

Like Deut 32:8–9, the author of Sir 24 seems to understand the various nations of the world as inheritances (Sir 24:7b). If one reads Sir 24 through the lens of Deut 32:8–9, one could perhaps see Wisdom herself as an “angel” to whom God has bequeathed Israel as a possession. After all, Wisdom is a divine being created by God who was ordered to inherit Israel. While lady Wisdom refers to Israel as her own inheritance, she also calls Israel the “portion of the Lord” and His inheritance, just as Deut 32:9 does.²⁶ By suggesting that both lady Wisdom and God possess Israel/Jacob as an inheritance, the author closely identifies lady Wisdom with God. The inheritance rhetoric perhaps explains the use of the verb “take possession” (*htaomai*), as well. In a certain sense, Wisdom and God “own” all the nations, but Israel is their special portion and inheritance. Like Deut 4:4–8, Ben Sira connects Israel’s wisdom with its access to God’s laws, which is straightforwardly understood to be the Law of Moses, also referred to as the Book of the Covenant. The Law of Moses is also referred to as Israel’s inheritance, which is another Deuteronomistic theme emphasizing its unparalleled access to God.

Ben Sira does not simply suggest that Israel has greater access to wisdom, however. The sage also hurls invectives against other nations. Israel’s God is sovereign, and Ben Sira subjects those who do not recognize that to harsh rhetoric. A Hebrew version²⁷ of Sir 36:1–22²⁸ remarks:

Save us, God of all, and establish fear of you over all the nations.
Wave [your hand] against foreign people (*‘m nkr*) that they may see
your mighty acts. As you showed yourself holy in their sight with
respect to us, so in our sight show yourself great with respect to them.
And they will know, just as we know, that there is no God except you.
Restore signs and do wonders again. Make the hand glorious and
strengthen the arm and the right hand. Rouse up anger and pour out
fury. Humble the [enemy] and drive away the foe. Hasten the end and
arrange the appointed time. For who can say to you, ‘What will you
do?’ Bring to an end the top of Moab’s brows,²⁹ the one who says,
‘There is no one except me.’ Gather all the tribes of Jacob that they
may maintain their inheritance (*ttnhlw*) as in the days of old...Show
mercy to the people called by your name. Israel, you have called
your firstborn...Give proof of your deeds, of those which were from
the beginning, and raise up the vision spoken in your name. Give a
reward to those who wait for you and may your prophets be faithful.
Hear your servants’ prayers, according to your favor for your people,
so the all the edges of the earth may know that you are the eternal
God (*‘l ‘lm*).

Some believe that Ben Sira’s mention of “foreign people” has a particular nation in mind³⁰—such as the Seleucid Greek rulers of Judea. However, judging from verses 1 and 3, which mention “all nations” and “foreign people,”

Sir 36:1–22 addresses all foreigners. Familiar terms that often denote ethnic foreignness in the Hebrew Bible, such as *gôy*, ‘*am* and the root *nkr* appear in this chapter. The appearance of the word, “people” (‘*am*) in reference to the people of God (36:22), that is Israel, contrasts sharply with 36:3’s call for God to take a hostile stance toward “foreign people” (‘*am nēkār*). The Greek translation renders ‘*am nēkār*, as “other nations” (*ethnē allotria*). The precise expression ‘*am nēkār* appears nowhere in the Hebrew Bible. The typical biblical expressions for foreigners with the root *nkr* are *ben-* + *geographic name* or *bēnē-nēkār*.³¹

Ben Sira instances the notion encountered many times in the Hebrew Bible that Israel’s God, the eternal God, has a special familial relationship with his people. By the time of Ben Sira’s composition, monotheism as an abstract concept has caught on, and so when he writes, “God of all” (36:1) and “there is no God except you” (36:5) he certainly means that no deity exists except the God of Israel. Interestingly, the Greek version of Ben Sira in verse 5 reads “O Lord” (*kyrie*), whereas the Hebrew version contains neither the divine name, “Yahweh” nor “Lord” (‘*ādōn*). Israel is God’s “firstborn” (*bēkôr*, 36:17), a familial term, but they are also his “servants” (‘*abdēkā*, 36:22). It is *his* people (‘*ammēkā*), Israel, who hold God’s favor (36:22) and who can anticipate rewards and wonders.

Though Ben Sira is primarily a wisdom text, this prayer shares the same overall hope as the explicitly apocalyptic visions of Daniel 7.³² Daniel 7 harnesses longstanding mythological imagery of a god doing battle against a sea dragon (representing chaos)³³ to convey the same anticipation found in Ben Sira. They both hope that the God of Israel, as sovereign over the whole universe, will judge the arrogant, insolent enemies of his people and restore his people to their rightful glory. In Daniel, a particular king representing the anti-Jewish Seleucid king, Antiochus IV Epiphanes, will “speak words against the Most High (‘*ilāyā*), wear out the holy ones³⁴ of the Most High, and attempt to change sacred times and the law” (7:25). Yet, in spite of the bad times portrayed by verse 25, Israel’s God, referred to as the “Ancient of Days” (‘*attiq yômîn*) will give someone who looks like a human being “honor and dominion so that all peoples, nations (‘*ūmayyā*) and all languages will serve him. His dominion will be an everlasting dominion that will not be taken away and his kingship is one that will not perish.” And also, the “holy ones of the Most High shall receive the kingdom and possess the kingdom forever—forever and ever” (7:18) “then judgment was given for the holy ones of the Most High, and the time arrived when the holy ones gained possession of the kingdom.” (7:22) “The kingship and dominion and the greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven shall be given to the people of the holy ones of the Most High; their kingdom shall be an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey them” (7:27). Daniel 7 harnesses classic mytho-political imagery of the ancient Near East when it presents Israel’s God as a deity who will smash the human kings represented by chaos monsters.

Verse 2 asks Israel’s God to “establish fear” (*paḥad*) of Him over all the nations (*gôyîm*). The word “fear” evokes the rhetoric of the Mesopotamian *Widener Chronicle* and *Marriage of Martu*, which condemn the foreign Gutians and Amorites for having no fear of the gods.³⁵ Additionally, Assyrian kings exclaimed that they conquered foreigners in order to instill proper “fear of god and king” (*palāḥ ili u šarri*). Sira 36 appears eschatological and hopes for the reversal of political fortunes for the Jews via the direct intervention of God. The sage reaffirms God’s unchallengeable authority with a rhetorical question, “Who will say to You, what will You do?” Sira 36 further condemns those who are “enemies” and “foes” of Israel. Ben Sira claims that they have inverted the maxim, “there is no God besides You” (*‘ên ‘ēlōhîm zûlātēkā*, 36:5) with a declaration that “there is none besides me” (*‘ên zûlātî*, 36:12). Ben Sira, like the book of Judith’s portrayal of Nebuchadnezzar, uses the accusation of extreme defiance against God as a way to disparage foreigners.

Finally, Sir 50:25–26 concludes with a highly disparaging comment about three ethnic groups:

My soul is repulsed (*qûš*) because of two nations (*gôyîm*); the third is not a people (*‘ênennû ‘am*): the inhabitants of Seir and Philistia, and the foolish nation (*gôy nābāl*) dwelling in Shechem.

There are some important differences between the Greek manuscript of Ben Sira and the Hebrew manuscript. Instead of a place name, Philistia (*pēlēšet*), the Greek uses the gentilic “Philistines” (*phylistiîm*) and instead of Edom, the Greek reads “the inhabitants of the mountain of Samaria” (*hoi kathēmenoi en orei Samareias*). The Greek version also reads *ethnos* both where the Hebrew *gôy* (nation) and *‘am* (people) appear in verse 25, but uses *laos* for *gôy* in verse 26. I will be dealing with the Hebrew text here, though the Greek reference to Samaria highlights the anti-Samaritan sentiment that was circulating in the Hellenistic period.

The similarity of this verse to Deuteronomistic and Holiness rhetoric is probably not a coincidence. The use of the epithets “foolish nation” and “not a people” to describe Shechem is probably inspired by Deut 32:21:³⁶ “I will make them jealous with a not-people (*bēlô’-‘am*), with a foolish nation I will vex them.” The verb *qûš*, also appears in Lev 20:23 to refer to Yahweh’s feelings of revulsion toward the former inhabitants of the land of Canaan. This verb appears rarely in the Hebrew Bible and its reemergence in Ben Sira suggests that the writer also appeals to Holiness polemics against the Canaanites.

The identity of the first nation that repulses God seems clear. Seir refers to Edom,³⁷ which by the time of Ben Sira would have been known by its Greek name, Idumea.³⁸ According to 1 Maccabees, in the middle of the second century BCE, Judas Maccabeus, leader of the Jewish revolt against Seleucid Greek rule, attacked Idumeans brutally, as part of his overall attempt to subjugate nations surrounding Judea (1 Macc 5:3, 65). Judas attacks Idumean

territory³⁹ because they were besieging (*periekathēnto*) Israel. The depiction of the Idumeans in 1 Maccabees seems to play off of biblical characterizations of Edom as an untrustworthy nation that takes advantage of Israel on a number of occasions (Num 20:14–21; Judg 11:17–18; Lam 4:22; Ezek 25:12–14; 35:15; 36:5; Joel 3:19; Amos 1:11; Obad 9–14; compare 2 Macc 10:15; Jdt 7:8–18). John Hyrcanus (134–104 BCE), the priestly ruler of Judea, conquered Idumea and forced the men to Judaize and undergo circumcision. It is not totally certain that major tensions between Judea and Idumea were present in the early second century when Ben Sira was composed. Yet, since the depiction of the Idumeans in 1 Maccabees builds on biblical motifs, it is probably safe to conclude that throughout the Hellenistic period, anti-Edom or anti-Idumean sentiment influenced Jewish thinking.

The identity of the second nation is less clear. Philistia is at face value the nation of the Philistines, which was, according to Deuteronomistic sources, a major enemy of Israel during the early monarchy.⁴⁰ It is difficult to identify Philistia in Ben Sira, because the inhabitants of what would have been Philistia in Ben Sira’s time probably differed substantially from the Philistines mentioned in earlier biblical texts.⁴¹ Ben Sira himself recalls the Deuteronomistic portrayal of the Philistines when he praises Samuel and David in his recollection of heroic Jewish ancestors (Sir 46:18; 47:7). In addition to this history, numerous prophetic texts pronounce divine judgment against the Philistines (Isa 2:6; 9:11 [9:12 ET]; 11:14; 14:29; Jeremiah 47; Ezek 25:15; Amos 1:8; Zeph 2:5). Some of these prophetic passages refer to Assyrian and Babylonian reprisals against Philistine city-states for their rebellion. Because the people who lived in the region of Philistia were not the same as the biblical Philistines, some modern commentators argue that in Ben Sira, Philistia is a code word that the author knowingly used to allude to another people. For example, Skehan and Di Lella suggest that Philistia represents “Hellenizing Jews” in the land of Judea. An alternative possibility, however, is that for Ben Sira, the nation of Philistia actually meant the biblical Philistines, and the author identified contemporary foreigners who lived in that region as Philistines.

Other texts suggest that there were people in the Hellenistic period identified as biblical Philistines. First Maccabees mentions that brothers Judas and Jonathan Maccabeus did battle with the enemies of Judea in the “land of the Philistines” (1 Macc 3:24, 38; 4:19). Judas Maccabeus “turned to Azotus [i.e., Ashdod] in the land of the Philistines; he tore down their altars and the carved images of their gods he burned with fire” (1 Macc 5:68). It would seem that the antecedent for the possessive pronouns of “their altars” and “their gods” is indeed the “Philistines,” showing that when these stories were composed there were people understood as Philistines who lived near Judea. Furthermore, it would appear as though Judas’s prayer for deliverance, which mentions the defeat of the Philistines at the hands of Jonathan, son of King Saul and King David, connects the “Philistines” of 1 Maccabees with the

biblical Philistines (1 Macc 4:30). Later, Jonathan Maccabeus pursued and defeated the forces of the Seleucid governor Apollonius at Azotus. Here, the text is sure to point out that with the burning and looting of the city, the temple of the Philistine god, Dagon was also burned (1 Macc 10:83–5; compare *Ant.* 13.91–105). In the remainder of 1 Maccabees 10, Jonathan gained control of two other traditionally Philistine cities, Ashkelon and Ekron.

Whatever the origin and history of the “Philistines” of 1 Maccabees, the text associates the “land of the Philistines” with idol worship, specifically worship of a god identified with the Philistines, unlike some of the other ethnic foreigners mentioned in 1 Maccabees, such as the Idumeans and Ammonites. Consequently, whether the inhabitants of Azotus that might have existed when 1 Maccabees was composed actually descended from the “Philistines” archaeologists say migrated to city-states on the southwest coastal plain of Palestine from the Aegean Sea region or Cyprus, does not matter when assessing the perspective of the text. As far as the text is concerned, the inhabitants of Azotus are *identified* as Philistines in Maccabees, and consequently are read as the nation described in the Bible—historical realities notwithstanding. By contrast, when Josephus mentions conflicts that traditionally Philistine-identified cities had with Jews after the biblical period, he does not use the word “Philistine” to describe these cities. In *Ant.* 5.294 Josephus explicitly identifies Ashkelon as a Philistine city in the time of the Judges, but does not do so when referring to the city in a post-biblical context. Josephus additionally refers to Gazans and Ashkelonites (*Ant.* 13.101, 149, 356–65) and the cities of Gaza and Ashdod (*Ant.* 13.101–105, 149; 14.126, 139, 197, *et passim*) but again they are not clearly labeled Philistine cities.

As I argued with respect to the Canaanites in Chapter Four, even though the Canaanite conquest was not an historical event, and the distinctions that the biblical text makes between Canaanites and Israelites are artificial and polemical, there were possibly people in the land of Israel identified as Canaanites. Similarly, the Philistia of Ben Sira could have been a reference to a people identified as Philistines even if such an identification would be considered ahistorical from a modern archaeological and critical perspective. 1 Maccabees may connect the inhabitants of the “land of the Philistines” with the biblical Philistines by mentioning their god, Dagon who was a central point of contention in the Ark narrative of 1 Samuel 5. Josephus, while he seems to avoid labeling contemporary inhabitants of cities like Azotus “Philistines,” does mention that contemporaneous Philistines worship Dagon, like the biblical Philistines. (*Ant.* 5.385; 6.1; 13.99–104).

One more option is that Ben Sira does not understand “Philistia” as biblical Philistia, but identifies it *with* biblical Philistia. Ben Sira’s attacks on these three nations may resemble Ezra–Nehemiah’s use of people in Israel’s history such as the Canaanites, the Ammonites and Moabites to disparage peoples contemporaneous with the narrative. In Ezra–Nehemiah, the people with whom the protagonists have conflicts are not actually (for the most part)

Canaanites, Ammonites or Moabites. Rather, the behavior they exhibited was like those traditional adversaries of Israel, and so the narratives of Ezra–Nehemiah argue, they should be treated like those people. Analogously, Philistia could serve as a prototype for people in Ben Sira’s own time who are *like* the Philistines. I am more inclined to believe that Philistia represents people identified *as* Philistines in Ben Sira’s time because the other nations mentioned in the passage—Idumea and Samaria—are nations that were extant at the time in which Ben Sira was composed and translated.

Finally, there is the “foolish nation that dwells in Shechem,” described as not even “a people.” This is probably a reference to Samaritans, an ethnic group that most Hellenistic Jews excluded from the people “Israel,” but who worshipped Israel’s God.⁴² There may have been prosaic reasons that Ben Sira mentions the city of Shechem. There was a Samaritan temple at Mount Gerizim, which is located near Shechem (modern Nablus). The temple was located there, possibly from the fifth century BCE (so Josephus claims) until it was destroyed by John Hyrcanus around 111/2 BCE (2 Macc 6:1–2; *Ant.* 11.306–12; 13.255).⁴³ If Ben Sira was composed in the early second century BCE, there was probably a Samaritan temple standing at Mount Gerizim at the time the book was composed. There were probably ideological reasons for invoking Shechem as well. The place evoked negative connotations because, according to the patriarchal traditions of Genesis, the town’s namesake raped Jacob’s daughter, Dinah (Genesis 34). As we saw with Judith, referring to Dinah’s rape is a way to disparage foreigners and allude to their alleged sexual immorality. Most likely, the designation, “foolish nation” (*gôy nābāl*) alludes both to Genesis 34 and Deut 32:21. The word, *nābāl* and the Hebrew word for “social outrage” (*nēbālā*) share the same root (*nbl*), and in the Hebrew Bible rape, including Shechem’s rape of Dinah, is often described as a social outrage.⁴⁴ As noted in Chapter Six, this word, *nēbālā*, can carry ethnic connotations because it is often used in situations in which the narrator distances “Israel” from the evil act committed. When a “social outrage” (*nēbālā*) is involved, a character in the story will say something to the effect of “such a thing is not done in Israel” (Gen 34:7; Judg 20:10; 2 Sam 13:12), communicating that the act is way outside the bounds of what is acceptable within Israelite society. The city of Shechem also connotes foreignness because Shechem himself was a Hivvite who was uncircumcised, and circumcision is a major theme in the story of Dinah’s rape.⁴⁵

Jews and Samaritans have a complicated history, but Hellenistic Jewish literature about Samaritans takes great pains to declare that Samaritans are not a part of the people, “Israel,” and casts them in a negative light.⁴⁶ Ben Sira is right at home in this tradition of anti-Samaritan sentiment and is the earliest example of it, unless one considers the foreigners disparaged in Ezra–Nehemiah, Samaritans. The sage harnesses the, literally, dehumanizing rhetoric of Deut 32:21 to declare that the nation of the Samaritans is “not a people.” In addition, the author insinuates through both the use of the word

“foolish” (*nābāl*) and the reference to Shechem that Samaritans are like the Canaanites. Finally, by relating Samaritans to Shechem, they are connected with the most foreign of the Canaanites—the Hivvites—who did not even practice circumcision, according to the narrative in Genesis 34. To cast Samaritans as Shechemites is to say in no uncertain terms that Samaritans, though in close proximity to Israel, have no claim to the heritage of Israel. They are not only not a part of the people Israel, they are no people at all.

Wisdom of Solomon

Ben Sira targets foreign nations generally in Chapter 36 and Edomites, Philistines and Samaritans specifically in 50:25–6. But Sira 36 prays for God’s judgment against other nations for political insolence towards God, which they have displayed by rejecting God’s rule and persecuting God’s people. Wisdom of Solomon, another wisdom text probably composed in the early part of the first century CE,⁴⁷ make the alleged religious practices of foreigners the main issue. Taking and reshaping the icon polemics of the Hebrew Bible, these Hellenistic authors make the worship of false deities the way to articulate the inferiority of *all* other nations. Unlike the Deuteronomistic tradition, which only polemicizes against the religious practices of the Canaanites, for many Hellenistic Jewish writers, idolatry characterizes foreigners in general and becomes the main distinction that certain authors will draw between Jews and non-Jews. For these authors, Gentiles express their insolence towards God by worshipping other deities, even though the truth of the one, true God is evident through observation of nature. The rejection of God and pursuit of false idols leads to all kinds of vices, which characterize the Gentile.

Notably, Wisdom reinterprets the biblical caricatures of the Canaanites and Egyptians for its Hellenized Jewish audience. Wisdom 12:23–7; 15:18–19 malign the Egyptians for worshipping grotesque animals, something that was considered particularly distasteful in both Jewish and non-Jewish circles. Wisdom 12:3 also attacks the Canaanites for their sorcery, child sacrifices and “licentious” rites (*teletas anosious*), probably playing off of common negative portrayals of the foreign religions in Greek and Roman literature.⁴⁸ Verse 5, however, adds that they also engaged in ritual cannibalism, a charge that appears in nowhere in earlier depictions of the Canaanites. The cannibalism charge is common in negative depictions of foreigners in Greek and Roman literature, showing that Wisdom is reinterpreting earlier portraits of the Canaanites according to tropes about foreigners his contemporaries in the Greek and Roman world would understand.⁴⁹ The author emphasizes God’s mercy and love for all things (11:23–6; 12:1–2), and also by extension, highlights the Canaanites’ obstinacy, by noting that God “chastised them a little” in order to give them an “opportunity to repent” (12:10). Alas, God’s attempt to punish them a little at a time was to no avail. The Canaanites were inherently flawed, for “their genealogy⁵⁰ (*genesis*) was evil, their wickedness inborn and their reasoning

faculties (*logismos*) would never change, for they were a cursed ‘seed’ (*sperma*) from the beginning.” That Wisdom sees the problem as endemic, intractable and permanent is evident through the repeated vocabulary related to descent. There is very little purity terminology here, but the idea that the lineage is inherently evil sounds similar to the “national defilement” that the Holiness tradition said that the former inhabitants of the land incurred as a result of their abominations (Lev 18:24). In Leviticus, the nation, as a descent group becomes defiled; in Wisdom the genealogy and “seed” has become evil. Unlike the Holiness tradition, Wisdom claims that this evil was inherent “from the beginning,” almost as if these foreigners were created that way. Not so for Israel, however. In contrast with the cursed seed of the Canaanites, Israel is a “holy people” and a “blameless seed” (Wis 10:15).

One would think that an ethnic group that was cursed from the beginning would raise theological problems for the author because it seems at odds with God’s infinite wisdom and goodness. In addition, God’s treatment of the Canaanites seems to collide with the idea that God loves all of God’s creation. The author seems to be aware of the tension because he writes:

For who will say, ‘What have you done?’ or resist your judgment? Who will accuse you for the for the destruction of nations which you made? Or who will come before you to advocate for unrighteous men? For neither is there any god besides you, whose care is for all men, to whom you should prove that you have not judged unjustly; nor can any king or ruler confront you about those whom you have punished. You are righteous and rule all things righteous, deeming it alien to your power to condemn him who does not deserve to be punished. For your strength is the source of your righteousness and your sovereignty over all causes you to spare all...you have the power to act whenever you choose (Wis 12:12–16, 18b).

Wisdom 3:12 may shine some light on the passage when it says that the children of the ungodly are “evil” and their offspring “accursed.” Evil and ungodliness is hereditary. Nevertheless, the idea that this accursedness and evil springs from the foreigners’ origins poses a problem. The author seems to appeal, in part, to God’s sovereignty and ultimate wisdom as a way to explain God’s treatment of certain people. Perhaps, as the book of Jubilees suggests, the “cursing” of the Canaanites was the result of the curse of Noah’s grandson Canaan in Genesis 9: “Canaan erred and his seed destroyed from off the earth...and none springing from him shall be spared on the day of judgment” (Jub 22:20–21).⁵¹ Since evil is genealogical, Canaan’s sin explains why all of his offspring have become cursed. Wisdom’s Canaanites somewhat resemble the Manda horde/*zēr ḥalqāti*, the marauding foreigners, who in their literary portrayal, plagued Mesopotamian kings from time to time. Not only do some of the accusations levied at the Canaanites and the Manda horde/*zēr*

ḥalqāti overlap—such as cannibalism—but this cursed people seems to be specially created for a mysterious, unknown reason.⁵² Their destiny is to cause problems and ultimately be destroyed.

Though Wisdom depicts the Canaanites and Egyptians horribly, even claiming that their reasoning faculties are defective, the author believes that all idolaters (i.e., all Gentiles) have damaged their cognitive abilities by worshipping false gods. Though ignorant, the Gentiles are fully culpable for their behavior because they rejected God despite observing the beauty of God’s wondrous works of creation. Wisdom 13:1 contends that “all humans are indeed foolish by nature (*physei*), and they⁵³ are ignorant of God, and are also unable to know the One who exists from the good things that are observable.” Nevertheless, “if through delight in the beauty of [natural phenomena] they took them to be gods, let them know how much superior is the Master of these things, for it was the primal author of beauty who created them” (Wis 13:3–4). Consequently, they are responsible for their ignorance; they are “not to be excused, for if they were so resourceful as to be able to infer the ‘Universe,’ how is it they did not sooner discover the Master of these things?” (Wis 13:8–9).

Wisdom 13–14 details how idolatry has deleterious effects on Gentile nations. “The idea of making idols was the beginning of sexual immorality,” Wis 14:12 puts it bluntly. Going further, Wis 14:27 exclaims that “the worship of the unspeakable idols is the beginning, cause and end of every evil.” Rooting all immorality—and especially sexual immorality—in idol worship merges the religious aspersions cast against the Canaanites in Deuteronomistic sources, with the moral aspersions cast against them in Leviticus 18 and 20. It also resembles the Holiness idea, noted in Chapter Six, that “such a thing is not done in Israel.” Israel may sin, but it does not sin like foreigners. As Leviticus 26 distances Israel from the defiling sexual abominations outlined in Leviticus 18 and 20, so Wisdom distances Israel from gross immorality by linking such immorality to idolatry. For this author, because Israel is not an idolatrous nation, it cannot participate in the same kind of immorality as Gentiles. Leviticus 26 does not say why Israel will not succumb to the same sexual immorality as those who inhabited the land before them. Later writers, such as the author of Wisdom, would creatively fill in the blanks by connecting sexual sins to idolatry.

Also like Leviticus 26, Wisdom makes distinctions between the punishments received by the Israelites and punishments received by foreigners, especially targeted foreigners such as the Canaanites and Egyptians. Israelites are punished “compassionately” whereas “the godless, brought to trial in anger, were tormented” (Wis 11:9). God tested Israel “like a reproving father,” but “others he scrutinized like a stern king passing judgment” (Wis 11:10). The author makes similar assertions elsewhere, such as in Wis 12:20–2. Wisdom takes a rational, calculated approach to God’s dispensation of rewards and punishments; God has an equation that distributes just rewards to those who

are worthy (Wis 3:5). Wisdom says that God “ordered all things by measure and number and weight” and for God the “entire cosmos is as a turn of the scale, and as a dewdrop in the dawn alighting on the earth” (Wis 11:20, 22). As Jonathan A. Linebaugh writes:

In Wisdom, it is only and always God who saves. The question is *whom* does he save? Answer: the worthy, because God is just and good. Divine benefaction does not disrupt the elemental structures of the cosmos; God’s giving exemplifies the theological and cosmological reality that he ‘arranged all things by measure and number and weight.’

The punishment of foreigners plays a pedagogical role for Israel (Wis 12:22), and their reception to correction confirms Israel’s inherent worth. Indeed, Wisdom calls Israel “a worthy colony of the servants of God” (Wis 12:7) so that they were able to live in his holy land.

The Apostle Paul

The Apostle Paul is also a Hellenistic Jewish writer, despite the fact that all of his extant letters form a significant part of Christian Scripture. Paul, like other Hellenistic Jews, such as the author of the Wisdom of Solomon, assumes that the Gentiles are depraved due to their idolatry. Yet, Paul also foregrounds apocalyptic themes in his letters, and many Jewish apocalyptic texts foresee a time in which God judges all peoples, including unrighteous Jews.⁵⁴ It is apparent that in addition to polemics against Gentiles, Paul is working with apocalyptic traditions, as well as his own readings and paraphrasing of the Hebrew Bible (in Greek). I suspect that a major reason Paul argues for his own particular path of salvation is because he is convinced of the unique, permanent and inherent depravity of Gentiles, conceptualized ethnically—a belief that some of the other Jewish authors discussed above shared. Caroline Johnson Hodge notes that beliefs about kinship, descent and ethnicity popular in the Greco-Roman world form the basis of Paul’s arguments:

Paul’s understanding of ethnic identity, like that of many authors from ancient Mediterranean cultures, is rooted in ideologies of kinship, ties to homeland, loyalty to a particular god or gods, participation in religious practices and adherence to particular laws or customs...Often he chooses totalizing language for non-Jews such as “gentiles” or “uncircumcised,” terms which, like “barbarian,” erase particularities. This totalizing language does not de-ethnicize these peoples, but it strategically constructs and highlights a particular facet of their identity, the fact that they are not Jews. Other

times he uses the more ethnically specific term “Greeks” to contrast with *Ioudaioi*. These oppositions are crucial because Paul formulates the gentile problem—alienation from God—in terms of ethnic differences between Jews and non-Jews.⁵⁵

That Paul is working with ethnic conceptualizations becomes abundantly clear in Rom 9:3, where he uses the expressions, “brothers” (*adelphos*) and “kinsmen” (*syngenēs*) according to the flesh,” in reference to fellow Jews. We might recall that the Deuteronomistic tradition uses “brothers” (*’aḥîm*) to denote ethnic kinship repeatedly.⁵⁶ The fact that Paul also uses the word “brothers” to describe Gentiles in Christ (e.g., Rom 1:13, 7:1, 4 *et passim*) shows that he is making an argument about Gentile Christians’ relationship to Jewish kinship. Through believing in(to) Christ, Gentiles can become adoptive brothers along with fellow Jews.

Paul’s negative portrait of the Gentiles’ depraved state draws from stock Hellenistic Jewish tropes about them. At the same time, Paul holds that *both* Jews and Gentiles are “under sin” (Rom 3:9–23), and will be subject to the judgment of God. Though both Jews and non-Jews face judgement, for Paul, sin has different manifestations and effects on different peoples. For non-Jews, their sin is based in their idolatrous tendencies (Rom 1:18–32), but for Jews, their sin is characterized as disobedience, which God has orchestrated for eschatological purposes (Rom 10:18–21; 11:25–32). Even though there are numerous examples in the Hebrew Bible of Israelites engaging in forbidden religious practices, Israel’s *current* sinful situation is not connected to idolatry. Paul appears to agree with the book of Judith that Jews “in the present day” do not worship idols (Jdt 8:18). Despite these important differences between sin’s manifestations among Jews and Gentiles, Paul concludes that Jews and Gentiles alike need salvation through Jesus Christ.⁵⁷

Romans 1, then, famously lays out the problem of Gentile sinfulness with an anti-idolatry polemic:

For the wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all impiety and unrighteousness of human beings who in unrighteousness suppress the truth. For what can be known of God is plain to them because God has revealed it to them. For his invisible things—his eternal power and divinity—from the creation of the cosmos, are clearly seen, being understood through the things that are made, so they are without excuse. Because having known God, they did not glorify him as God or give him thanks, but rather became foolish in their thoughts and their senselessness darkened their hearts. Claiming to be wise, they became foolish (*emōranthēsan*) and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for the likenesses of corruptible icons, of humans, of birds, of four-footed animals, and of reptiles (Rom 1:18–23).

Rom 1:18–32 shares some basic ideas with Jeremiah 10; Isa 44:6–18 and Psalm 115—that is, it is like Wisdom of Solomon 13–14, a recast icon polemic. In the Hellenistic period, the anti-*icon* polemic morphs into an anti-*idolatry* polemic. Unlike the Hebrew Bible’s icon polemics, there is no doubt that in Paul’s time, icons have no power in and of themselves and that the gods who non-Jews worship are either considered non-existent or demons. For Paul, the idols Gentiles worship are *not* gods “by nature” (Gal 4:8; 1 Thess 1:9–10) and represent demonic powers (1 Cor 10:20–2).⁵⁸

Unsurprisingly, the decision to turn to idolatry has negative effects on the mental disposition of Gentiles—an idea expressed in Wisdom of Solomon, as well (Wis 12:3). Similarly, Rom 1:22 asserts that the Gentiles have “become foolish” (*emōranthēsan*) because of their idol worship, a verb (*mōrainō*) that LXX Jer 10:14 also uses to describe the cognitive faculties of idol makers. Paul says that as a consequence of their idolatry, God also “hands over” the Gentiles to their hearts’ “desires” (*epithymia*, Rom 1:24). As a number of commentators have shown, this “handing over” (*paradidōmi*) does not mean that God has passively left the Gentiles to their own devices. Rather, it is like a guard “handing over” a prisoner to another authority figure to be punished.⁵⁹ Like Jdt 16:9, in which Judith’s beauty “seized” Holofernes’s eyes and “captured” his mind, Paul describes Gentiles’ endemic susceptibility to sexual immorality as a kind of involuntary compulsion. Additionally, Paul appeals to ways of caricaturing foreigners common among the literate, Roman imperial culture of which he was a part. As Stanley Stowers points out, Paul’s reference to the power of desire places his rhetoric in a well-known discourse about moral continence and ethnicity that permeated the Roman Empire.⁶⁰

Paul contends that, as a punishment for their idolatry, God hands the Gentiles over to other vices as well:

God handed them over to a debased mind to do what ought not be done. They were filled with all manner of unrighteousness, evil, aspiring beyond their station (*pleonexia*), malice. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, maliciousness. They are gossips, slanderers, haters of God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless (Rom 1:28b–31).

In its polemic against idolatry, Wisdom of Solomon offers a similar list of sins, asserting that idolaters:

keep neither their lives nor marriages pure, but they either treacherously kill one another, or grieve one another by adultery, and all is a raging riot of blood and murder, theft and deceit, corruption, faithlessness, tumult, perjury, confusion over what is good, forgetfulness

of favors, defiling of souls, sexual immorality, disorder in marriages, adultery and debauchery (Wis 14:24–26).

This “handing over” is a punishment actively imposed by God on the Gentiles as a result of their idolatry. To put it another way, being handed over to desire constitutes a hereditary punishment.⁶¹ The Gentiles’ subjugation to desire is a permanent, inherent, hereditary condition that serves as a collective penalty for idolatry. Paul, then, appeals to the biblical concept of hereditary punishment not to target a specific ethnic group, as most biblical texts do, but to condemn *all* Gentiles. The Holiness tradition holds that the former inhabitants of Canaan incurred permanent, hereditary defilement as a result of committing abominations in the land of Israel. Likewise, Paul asserts that God handed over the Gentiles to the desires of their hearts for impurity (*akatharsia*, Rom 1:24). In LXX, *akatharsia* can be used to translate both impurity in the realm of ritual practice (i.e., so-called “ritual” impurity), and moral transgression. It would appear as though Paul chooses a word that, like the use of “defilement” (*tm'*) against the Canaanites in the Holiness tradition, both connote deep moral transgressions and also overlap with the realm of ritual practice.⁶² Elsewhere, in 1 Thess 4:3–7, Paul uses impurity and holiness language to contrast the sexual morality of Gentiles who are not in the Lord Jesus with Gentiles who are, arguing that “God did not call us to impurity (*akatharsia*) but to holiness (*hagiasmos*)” (1 Thess 4:7).

Jeremiah 10:6–8⁶³ portray the nations who do not fear Yahweh as insolent, denying Yahweh honor that is due to him, and Paul expresses a similar idea in Romans 1:19–21:

What can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. Ever since the creation of the world his eternal power and divine nature, invisible though they are, have been understood and seen through the things he has made. So, they are without excuse; for though they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him...

Paul may not have had Jeremiah 10 specifically in mind when he wrote Romans 1, but the themes of insolence, rebellion and foolishness do seem to crop up repeatedly in icon/idolatry polemics. Like the writer of Wisdom of Solomon, for Paul, the Gentiles are fully culpable for their rejection of God because observation of nature should have alerted people to God’s sovereignty. Jeremiah by contrast does not say why everyone should have recognized the power of Israel’s God.

A number of modern interpreters believe that Paul addresses all humanity, and polemicizes against the *human* condition, and not just Gentiles in Rom 1:18–32.⁶⁴ These commentators claim that when Paul says that God’s wrath will be revealed against “all unrighteousness and wickedness of human

beings” in Romans 1:18 (*pasan asebeian kai adikian anthrōpōn*), it clearly shows that Paul’s anti-idolatry polemic refers to *all* humanity. Not only do other New Testament interpreters disagree,⁶⁵ but in light of Jeremiah 10, the use of “all” and “human beings” seems to be a kind of rhetorical hyperbole, typical of icon/idolatry polemics. It appears very similar to the use of “every human being” (*pas anthrōpos*) in LXX Jer 10:14: “Every human being has become foolish (*emōranthē*), apart from knowledge; every goldsmith has been shamed because of his graven images.” Just as Jer 10:14 refers not literally to every, single human being, but every human being who constructs icons, so the seemingly universal rhetoric of Rom 1:18 specifically to *idolaters* (i.e., Gentiles). The wording of Wis 13:1, also seems to engage in this kind of rhetorical hyperbole: “All humans are foolish by nature, and are ignorant of God.” The first part of the sentence seems to encompass all of humanity: “*all humans* are foolish by nature,” but then the author clarifies through a relative clause that “all humans” refers to those who are ignorant of God (i.e., Gentiles). Much like Wis 13:1, then, in Rom 1:18, Paul shows that his seemingly general reference to humans, really means humans “who suppress the truth” about the Creator and worship idols—that is, Gentiles (Rom 1:19–21).

That Paul differentiates the sins of Jews and Gentiles is also apparent in the next chapter of Romans. From Rom 2:17 on, Paul debates an imaginary Jewish interlocutor⁶⁶ who feels as though Jews are somehow shielded from the wrath of God that Paul believes is coming. Like the writer of Wisdom of Solomon, this Jewish debater professes the inherent moral worthiness of Jews over against Gentiles. Wisdom 15:3 asserts that “even if we sin, we are yours, knowing your power; but we will not sin, knowing that we are reckoned yours. For to know you is complete righteousness and to know your power is the root of immortality.” Romans 2:17 and following is where Paul differentiates himself from some ideas professed in Wisdom of Solomon. Paul reminds his imaginary Jewish opponent that though the Jews’ relationship to God is different from that of Gentiles, Jews *do* sin and if a Jew sins he will be judged by a righteous God who shows no partiality (Rom 2:9–16). God’s relationship to Jews and Gentiles, respectively, is not based on a nation’s inherent worthiness. It is a result of the “law of faith,” which is rooted in genealogical blessings due to a faithful ancestor. We should also compare Paul’s view with that of Wis 3:5, which suggests that Israel’s worthiness was demonstrated through God’s testing.⁶⁷ For Paul, Israel’s unique relationship with God is a result of God’s will and his recognition of their ancestors, not because they have performed works of the Law:

Paul presents the story of Jacob and Esau, perhaps an even better example because the two sons are twins, born of the same father and mother. Even before the sons were born, Paul explains, God

told Rebecca that the younger son would be chosen over the older. Paul stresses that this preference is in no way related to the particular merits or faults of either child; it was simply God’s choice.⁶⁸

Though Paul adamantly states that Jews will be subject to God’s judgment as well, he reveals in a number of places that Jews and Gentiles, as a whole, have a different relationship to sin. In the exchange, Paul asks his opponent:

[You], the one proclaiming, “Do not steal,” do you steal? The one saying, “Do not commit adultery,” do you commit adultery? [You], the abominator of idols, do you commit sacrilege?

In verse 21 and the first part of verse 22, Paul pairs the sins of stealing and adultery with the very same sins, stealing and adultery. But when it comes to idols, Paul instead pairs idolatry with sacrilege (literally, “to rob a temple”), a jarring disjunction noted by numerous commentators. There is no agreement about what “temple robbery” in this context means.⁶⁹ I suspect, however, that it is a way of expressing the general idea of “sacrilege.” As Ben Witherington III points out, Paul’s contemporary, Philo of Alexandria links theft, adultery, sacrilege (and murder).⁷⁰ Notably, “abominator” (*bdelyssomenos*) shares the same root as the word used by LXX to translate the Hebrew word for “abomination,” *tō’ēbā* (*bdelygma*).⁷¹ Not only does Paul distance Jews from idolatry, he seems to counterpose “abomination” with “sacrilege,” a tendency that appears in the Holiness tradition as well.⁷² Paul is not necessarily drawing directly from the Holiness tradition in Rom 2:22 (after all, adultery is banned in Leviticus 18 and 20); rather, it is an interesting coincidence that when the Apostle makes distinctions between Jewish and Gentile sin, a distinction between abomination and sacrilege reemerges.

More pertinent is that, similar to the Holiness tradition, when it comes to the sins that *characterize* the ethnic foreigner, Paul distances Israel from those particular sins. For the Holiness tradition, it is the defiling abominations (*tō’ēbôt*) of Leviticus 18 and 20 that define the foreigner, and in its indictment of Israel’s sin, Leviticus 26 nowhere claims that Israelites have committed those particular sins. Likewise, for most Hellenistic Jewish authors, idolatry characterizes the Gentile, so Paul nowhere claims that Jews are committing that particular sin, either. Both idol worship and sacrilege are very serious and result in dire penalties, to be sure, but the former has different effects on people’s—particularly ethnic peoples’—constitution.

The different relationship that the two peoples have with sin may explain why Paul engages the language of “nature” sometimes when he refers to the Gentile sins. When speaking with Peter, a fellow Jew, Paul says, “We are Jews by nature, and not sinners descended from⁷³ the Gentiles” (Gal 2:15). I cannot help but hear an echo of Wisdom of Solomon, which asserts that those who worship idols are “foolish *by nature*” (Wis 13:1). Paul connects

sexual immorality, idol worship and Gentiles in Romans 1:24–7 as well as in 1 Thess 4:3–7. In the latter passage, Paul presents sexual immorality as a feature of the Gentiles, described collectively as those “who do not know God.” The implication for both the author of Wisdom and Paul is that the difference between Jewish and Gentile sin stems from a “natural” condition. Because the natural disposition of Jews and Gentiles differ, God must act *contrary to nature* in order to save the Gentiles and make them co-heirs to Abraham’s promise. Paul writes, in reference to the Gentiles:

For if you have been cut from what is by nature a wild olive tree and grafted, *contrary to nature*, into a cultivated olive tree, how much more will these natural branches be grafted back into their own olive tree (Rom 11:24).

The olive tree serves as a metaphor for both Jewish disobedience and Gentile incorporation into the promise of Abraham. But the use of “nature” is significant with respect to ethnicity because, in the most explicit way possible, it conveys the “naturalizing” that takes place in ethnic group conceptualizations. What is also important about the passage is that it demonstrates that just because ethnicity has been “naturalized” and fixed does not necessarily mean that is *absolutely* unchangeable. For Paul, the naturalness and fixedness of ethnicity is poignantly communicated by the fact that God must intervene *against nature* in order to bring the Gentiles into the fold. There is no evidence that Paul draws on earlier biblical material in his portrayal of God in Romans 11, but the idea that God can bring into being or terminate the existence of “peoples” and “nations” precedes Paul (e.g., Deut 28:9; 29:12; Isa 10:7; Jer 1:10). God is sovereign over the constitution of peoples and nations and so He can, extraordinarily, alter the natural order with respect to ethnicity to refashion and reform an ethnic group’s composition.

For Paul, like other biblical and Hellenistic Jewish writers, Israel as a whole can sin grievously (Rom 10:19, 21; compare 4 Ezra 9:31–7; 2 Bar 5:1; 19:3⁷⁴) and individual Jews can engage in all kinds of sins (e.g., *T. Mos.* 5:1–6; 8:1–5; 1 Macc 2:15; Rom 2:17–29). Jews can also be punished harshly as a group (Rom 9:27–30; compare 2 Bar 4:1; 6:9; 13:9; 15:6; 78:3–7; 79:2). But because of Israel’s unique relationship with its God, their relationship with sin differs (Rom 11:11, 23–8). Paul exclaims that the Gentiles are enslaved to desire as a result of the idolatry that characterizes them (Rom 1:24); and the sinfulness that stems from idolatry is a part of their ethnic composition (Gal 2:15; 4:8; compare Wis 12:10–11). By contrast, Jews sin immensely by being disobedient (Rom 10:21), but they do not have *that particular* problem with idolatry.⁷⁵ Paul can view Jews’ and Gentiles’ relationship with idolatry differently because he evaluates the history of the two groups through a strong ethnic framework. By differentiating the two

ethnic groups’ relationship to idolatry, Paul casts Israel’s sin as a deviation, and temporary lapse in obedience, but for Gentiles, sinfulness exemplifies their permanent condition.

All people will be judged for their sins, this judgment seems to affect Jews and “Greeks” differently:

There will be anguish and distress for everyone who does evil, the Jew first, and also the Greek. But glory, honor and peace for everyone who does good, the Jew first and also the Greek. For God shows no partiality (*prosōpolēmpsia*). All who have sinned apart from the law will also perish apart from the law, and all who have sinned under the law will be judged by the law (Rom 2:9–11).

The expression “the Jew first and also the Greek” implies a hierarchical and differential relationship.⁷⁶ Stowers explains the differential relationship with sin as a matter of stored up wrath against the Gentiles. Jews, through their relationship with God, have had their sins forgiven, but the Gentiles are in a particularly dangerous place because they have had no such relationship with God.⁷⁷ “No partiality” here, and in all ancient contexts, means everyone gets what they deserve based on who they are in the social—or in this case cosmic—order. To a native English speaker who grew up in a Western democracy, the word “impartiality” may connote “equality,” but the truth is that in an ancient context the word means “fairness” with respect to hierarchy.⁷⁸ Someone getting their *due* is contingent on what is *due* to that person as a member of a particular group. It is “fair” and “just” treatment, but it is by no means equal treatment. Returning to the Apostle’s olive tree imagery in Rom 11:24, the expression “how much more so” (*posō mallon*) seems to also express the hierarchical relationship between those branches that naturally belong to the tree, and those who do not. The gardner is inclined to prefer the branches of the cultivated tree. By now, having encountered the Holiness tradition’s language of “one law for the native and the resident alien,” it should come as no surprise that a passage that may seem to promote sameness and equality to modern ears, actually reinforces distinction and hierarchy.

It would be tempting to individualize Paul’s concept of salvation and claim that he advocates that salvation comes by *personal* faithfulness alone. While, of course, individuals must respond to the Gospel by believing and being baptized *into* it (*pisteuō/baptizō eis*, Rom 6:3; Gal 2:16; 1 Cor 12:13),⁷⁹ when Paul talks about salvation through “faithfulness,” he does not seem to be talking primarily about personal faith or private belief. Rather, he appeals to the biblical concept of hereditary blessing.⁸⁰ Hereditary blessings are a function of God’s will, and descendants are blessed on the basis of the positive actions of their ancestors (e.g., Abraham, Phineas, David; compare Sira 44–5). Paul understands, quite reasonably, that Israel’s election and its special

relationship with God are a consequence of God’s response to Abraham’s faithfulness. As Hodge notes in reference to Rom 4:14:

The Law does not bear or guarantee the promise; a faithful God and faithful ancestors do. The phrase *ek nomou* [out of the Law], when juxtaposed with the parallel expression *ek pisteōs* [out of faithfulness], is intentionally absurd; no one is born out of the Law. This contrast makes light of the absurdity of making law-keeping a basis for passing down blessings and promises to whole peoples...The phrase *ek pisteōs* reminds [Paul’s] interlocutor, and his audience that status before the God of Israel is determined not by the actions of the believer (like law-keeping) but by God himself, who founds lineages of his people through faithful ancestors.⁸¹

The failure of Jews to recognize that the faithfulness of their ancestors resulted in hereditary blessing is the source of their rebellion (Rom 9:31–2). Apprehending the role “faithfulness” and hereditary blessing play is the key to following the Law, not merely performing works of the law.

Paul contrasts the Gentiles with Jews in the latter part of Romans 10, pointing out that it is through Gentile salvation that Jews will, ironically, come to recognize Christ. Here, Paul paraphrases Deut 32:21:

But I ask, have they not heard? On the contrary: “Their voice has gone out through all the earth. And their words to the borders of the civilized world.” Yet I ask, did Israel not understand? Moses first said: “I will make you jealous with a non-nation (*ouk ethnei*); with a foolish nation (*ethnei asunetō*), I will vex you.” Isaiah is so bold as to say: “I was found by those who did not seek me.” But of Israel he says, “The entire day I extended my hands to a disobedient and obstinate people” (Rom 10:18–21).

Like Ben Sira, this particular Deuteronomistic text captures the imagination of Paul. As noted in Chapter Five, Deuteronomy 32 is cast as Moses’s farewell address but the text clearly refers to what led to the Babylonian Exile. Deuteronomy 32:16–17 refers to the Israelites’ religious transgressions against Yahweh. Yet, Paul cites only the second half of Deut 32:21, leaving out the essential first half that mentions Yahweh’s rationale for provoking Israel with a “non-people,” which is that they provoked him with “non-gods.” Paul reframes Deut 32:21b, excising the reference to Israel’s own idolatry to fit his own perspective, that the Gentiles are the “foolish nation” that provoke the Jews to accept Christ. It is not hard to see why this verse appeals to Paul. For some Jewish writers, and especially Paul, idolatry makes nations inherently foolish and upends their cognitive faculties. Paul’s juxtaposition of Deut 32:21 with Isa 65:2 here perfectly contrasts the different relationship

Jews and Gentiles have with sin. The Gentiles are a foolish nation, marked by the distinct foolishness that stems from idolatry, but the Jews are a disobedient and obstinate nation. Also similar to Leviticus 26, Israel's punishment is temporary, with an expected opportunity for reconciliation with God, for “even those of Israel, if they do not persist in unbelief, will be grafted in, for God has the power to graft them in again” and ultimately “all Israel will be saved” (Rom 11:23, 26).

According to the Apostle Paul, the solution to the Gentiles' special sin problem—their endemic slavery to false deities (Gal 4:8) and their innate bondage to desire—is an adoptive relationship with Israel's God through Christ. The new relationship is explicitly familial and ethnic, because:

by becoming a part of Christ and being “in” Christ, gentiles become “sons of God,” “descendants of Abraham,” and “heirs according to the promise.”...scripture announces to Abraham that “all the gentiles will be blessed in you.” Christ, who is the *sperma Abraam* (Gal 3:16), now makes gentiles into *sperma Abraam* (3:29).⁸²

Via adoption, Gentiles can receive the benefits of being in relationship with Israel's God. The need for adoption, though, is predicated on the inferiority of the Gentiles, and their inclusion into the line of Abraham underscores their need for a radical, “unnatural” change to their own inferior lineage.

Ethnic foreignness in second temple period Jewish texts

The Second Temple Period biblical texts we have observed in this chapter take some basic ideas found in attacks on foreigners in the Deuteronomistic tradition, the Holiness tradition as well as biblical icon polemics to disparage foreigners in their own time. Some texts, such as Ezra–Nehemiah direct their polemical gaze toward certain, clearly delineated foreigners. Other texts, such as Wisdom of Solomon and the letters of Paul use these ideas to condemn all Gentiles in some way. Though these texts did not always draw explicitly from earlier Scriptures to make every point, these Second Temple Period authors did participate in a way of talking about foreigners that has deep roots in the Hebrew Bible. These authors retrofitted earlier negative, biblical portrayals of foreigners for their own time, by creatively blending them with negative views of foreigners found in the Greek and Roman world.

The themes established in earlier biblical polemics against foreigners had a long afterlife. The genesis of all the portrayals of foreigners found in Ezra–Nehemiah, Judith, Ben Sira, Wisdom of Solomon and the Apostle Paul were formed in Holiness and Deuteronomistic texts, as well as the icon polemics of Jeremiah 10, Isaiah 44 and Psalm 115. These literary traditions of the Bible established themes that would persist throughout the different biblical texts, including: the insolence of foreigners who do not recognize the authority of

Israel's God, sexual immorality, the relationship between defective cognitive faculties and the creation of religious statues, Israel's special access to wisdom, and finally, “Canaanitization,” the polemical tactic of suggesting that foreigners are like the Canaanites. The connection between idolatry and sexual sin in particular was compelling because of common ethnic motifs floating around in Greek and Roman literature. Sexual immorality and vice was a common way in which Greek and Roman sources would disparage foreigners, as well. Jewish writers utilized the characterization of the Canaanites as both idolaters in Deuteronomistic sources and as sexually immoral in Holiness sources to make a link between idol worship and sexual immorality, distancing Jews from this particularly potent stereotype of foreigners.

In most of these texts, it is clear that the foreigners disparaged in them are ethnic foreigners. The entire narrative of Ezra–Nehemiah revolves around the relationship between genealogy and land. A particular descent group, “Israelites” (just the Exile community) seeks to re-establish their residence in a land with which they explicitly identify. They also employ the word “seed” (*zera'*) to distinguish between Israelites and foreigners (Ezra 9:2; Neh 9:2). Judith uses Greek ethnic terminology such as *genos* and *laos* to both describe Israelites and non-Israelites and the book generously employs the “sons of” + geographic name construction (e.g., *huiioi Chanaan*, “sons of Canaan”). Ben Sira also employs Hebrew and Greek terms that often connote ethnicity: *am*, *gôy*, *nkr* and in Greek, *genos*, *laos* and especially *ethnos*. The sage alludes to Deut 32:8–9, a key passage that establishes that God set the boundaries of the earth and the parameters of nations. Wisdom of Solomon is also full of terminology that refers to descent. The Canaanites are a defective genealogy cursed seed (*sperma*), contrasted with the blameless seed of Israel. For Wisdom of Solomon, evil is also hereditary, which supports its negative characterization of the Canaanites and indeed all idol worshippers. The Apostle Paul shares some assumptions with Wisdom of Solomon, particularly the idea that idolatry corrupts the mental faculties of Gentiles. Paul, too, uses descent terms such as *ethnos* and *sperma* repeatedly in his letters (and *genos* + *Israēl* once in Phil 3:5). Though Paul emphasizes descent in his arguments for the Gospel, the appearance of geographic names (*Israēl*, *Ioudaios*, *Hellēn*) shows that territorial origins are relevant to Paul's understanding of foreignness. In some of the cases in the later Jewish material, it is clear that we are dealing with a concept of ethnic foreignness because the foreigners, who are sometimes spoken of as an undifferentiated collectivity (“Gentiles” or “Greeks”), are contrasted with Jews or Israel, which is clearly presented as an ethnic group.

All of these texts communicate the inferiority of foreigners, mostly due to their worship of other deities and their refusal to recognize the sovereignty of Israel's God. Some contrast God's heavenly reign with the terrestrial rule of ungodly nations. Ben Sira's criticism of foreigners definitely has political elements, as the sage asks God to execute judgment against nations who have either wronged Israel or defied God's will. The political elements found in

some of these texts, in some ways, mimic the rhetoric of Neo-Assyrian kings. The language of insolence and the violent response of Israel’s God bear the hallmarks of the invectives against those who rebelled against the king of Assyria and faced the wrath of Aššur. Though the reign of Israel’s God is invisible, some Second Temple Period texts use the language of the imperial to communicate God’s cosmic rule or God’s coming eschatological kingdom.

Notes

- 1 Caroline Johnson Hodge, *If Sons, Then Heirs: A Study of Kinship and Ethnicity in the Letters of Paul* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 49.
- 2 For details on *mīs pī* rituals, see Christopher Walker and Michael B. Dick, *The Induction of the Cult Image in Ancient Mesopotamia: The Mesopotamian Mīs Pī Ritual* (SAALT 1; Helsinki: The Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project, 2001); Michael B. Dick, “Prophetic Parodies of Making the Cult Image,” in *Born in Heaven Made on Earth* (ed. Michael B. Dick; Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1999), 1–53.
- 3 See authorship discussion in William L. Holladay, *Jeremiah* (vol. 1; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1986), 324–6, who defends the possibility that Jeremiah wrote the passage. The text of Jeremiah 10 contains numerous complications, starting with the fact that LXX differs substantially from MT, and a Hebrew *Vorlage* for both versions has been found in fragments at Qumran (4QJer^b for LXX; 4QJer^a for MT). LXX and MT differ with respect to the order of verses and some verses found in MT do not appear in LXX (MT 10:6–8, 10).
- 4 Nathaniel B. Levtow, *Images of Others: Icon Politics in Ancient Israel* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2008), 86–129.
- 5 Levtow, *Images*, 108. See n. 4 for references.
- 6 *Ibid.*
- 7 Extant manuscripts date from the late eighth-seventh century BCE (contemporaneous with very early stratum of the Deuteronomistic tradition), though the “prophecy” might have developed around the time of Nebuchadnezzar I. Benjamin R. Foster, *Before the Muses: An Anthology of Akkadian Literature* (vol. 1; Bethesda, Md.: CDL Press, 1996), 302–5; Rykle Borger, “Gott Marduk und Gott-König Šulgi als Propheten: Zwei prophetische Texte,” *BiOr* 28 (1971): 5–20.
- 8 See pp. 164–5 on the possible West Semitic custom of using the national god’s wrath as an explanation for misfortune.
- 9 Holladay, *Jeremiah*, 336.
- 10 With respect to Hadad, see, KTU/CAT 1.5 and 1.6 in *Ugaritic Narrative Poetry* (ed. Simon B. Parker; SBLWAW 9; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1997), 138–59. Ishtar’s/Inanna’s descent into the underworld can be found in Foster, *Before the Muses*, 402–9; Stephanie Dalley, *Myths from Mesopotamia* (Oxford University Press, 2000), 154–62. For Marduk’s foray to the underworld, see discussion in Tikva Frymer-Kensky, “The Tribulations of Marduk: The So-Called Marduk’s Ordeal Texts,” *JAOS* 13 (1983): 139.
- 11 Frymer-Kensky, “Tribulations of Marduk,” 132–3, 139–41. Regardless of what precisely happens to Marduk, or how this text fits into the cultic life of Babylon, it seems clear that Aššur is a superior god to Marduk and presides over the case against him (see lines 18–19 of KAR 143+219, reproduced by Frymer-Kensky,

- 133). The text, then, assumes the superiority of Assyria's national god over the national god of Babylon. Frymer-Kensky argues that the political setting of the “ordeal” is the return of Marduk's statue by Esarhaddon after its capture by Sennacherib. A version of “Marduk's Ordeal” seems to have been reenacted in the Assyrian version of the *akitu* festival (124 n. 76).
- 12 Compare Marilyn J. Lundberg, who argues that Jeremiah 10 promotes monotheism in “The Mis-Pi Rituals and Incantations and Jeremiah 10:1–16,” in *Uprooting and Planting: Essays on Jeremiah for Leslie Allen* (ed. John Goldingay; London: T&T Clark, 2007), 210–27.
- 13 *bē'ir* is not used in this way in biblical Hebrew, but a cognate Phoenician term *b'rr* is used to describe Aramean nobles. See, e.g., J. Hoftijzer and K. Jongeling, *Dictionary of the North-West Semitic Inscriptions* (vol. 1; Leiden: Brill, 1995), 185; Herbert Donner and Wolfgang Röllig, *Kanaanäische und Aramäische Inschriften 1* (Wiesbaden: Harrasowitz Verlag, 2002), 5 (24^{14–15}).
- 14 The author of Ezra identifies “Israel” (*'am yiśrā'ēl*; *kol-yiśrā'ēl*) as those who experienced exile (*bēnē hammedīnā hā'ōlīm miššēbī haggōlā*, Ezra 2:1–2, 70). It could be that some, if not all, of the foreigners mentioned in Ezra-Nehemiah were understood as Israelites and Judahites who did not go into exile.
- 15 For arguments about the earlier dating of Deut 23:8–9, see Chapter Four. Unlike some scholars, I believe that Deut 23:8–9 is not post-exilic because for the text to have had ideological impact and prestige in the post-exilic period, it seems more likely that the text was circulating for some time.
- 16 Deborah Levine Gera, *Judith* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2014), 36–44; Barbara Schmitz and Helmut Engel, *Judit* (Freiburg: Herder, 2014), 37–43. There is a debate over whether or not there was an original Hebrew text of Judith.
- 17 Gera, *Judith*, 57–78; Jeremy Corley, “Imitation of Septuagintal Narrative and Greek Historiography in the Portrait of Holofernes,” in *A Pious Seductress: Studies in the Book of Judith* (ed. Géza G. Xeravits; DCLS 14; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2014), 22–54.
- 18 Specifically, covering animals in sackcloth for petitionary mourning (compare Jdt 4:10, 12 and Jonah 3:7–8); Gera, *Judith*, 46–7, 182–3; Schmitz and Engel, *Judit*, 151–2.
- 19 I assume that Tyrians, Sidonians and residents of historically Philistine cities such as Azotus (Ashdod) and Ashkelon are included among the “sons of Canaan” because in Jdt 5:3, Holofernes confers with the “governors of the coastland” (*satrapas tēs paralias*), and Judith elsewhere identifies these peoples as “residents of the coastland” (*tous katoikountas tēn paralian*, Jdt 2:28).
- 20 Interestingly, Judith uses this expression instead of the usual LXX word used to translate the Hebrew *gēr*, which is *prosēlutos*. Judith's use of *paroikos kai misthōtos* seems to correspond to the *tōšāb wēšākīr* of Exod 12:45; 22:10; 25:6, 40. See Gera, *Judith*, 183.
- 21 See discussion in Alexander A. Di Lella, “Introduction” in *The Wisdom of Ben Sira: A New Translation with Notes by Patrick Skehan; Introduction and Commentary by Alexander A. Di Lella* (AB 29; New York: Doubleday, 1987), 8–10.
- 22 See discussion in Marko Marttila, *Foreign Nations in the Wisdom of Ben Sira: A Jewish Sage between Opposition and Assimilation* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2012), 25–32.
- 23 Marttila, *Foreign Nations*, 98–9.
- 24 That is, *ektēsamēn*, following Rahlfs's critical edition of LXX. The word literally means “to possess.” Some follow Joseph Ziegler's edition of Ben Sira and render

- ēgēsamēn*, taken to mean “rule,” “have power” or “hold sway” (see discussion in Marttila, *Foreign Nations*, 88). NRSV and Skehan and Di Lella render “I held sway” (*Wisdom of Ben Sira*, 327). Josef Schreiner renders “hatte ich Macht” (*Jesus Sirach 1–24* [NEchtBAT 38; Würzburg: Echter, 2002], 129). Georg Sauer translates, “herrschte ich” (*Jesus Sirach/Ben Sira* [DATD A 1; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2000], 177).
- 25 Marttila aptly notes that Deuteronomistic texts had a “perpetual impact” in the Second Temple Period. See *Foreign Nations*, 96–102.
 - 26 Understanding *Sira* 24 as influenced by the parlance of Deut 32:8–9 means that Rahlfs’ edition rendering *klēronomia autou* makes more sense. Wisdom, closely identified with God, and possibly even a manifestation of God, inherits Israel with God. The syntax in LXX Deut 32:9 is even similar. God’s inheritance (*schoinisma klēronomia*) is tacked on, with no verb, to the reference to the Lord’s portion (*meris*). By contrast, arguing that the third person possessive pronoun appears to make little sense, Marttila and Skehan and Di Lella follow Ziegler and read *klēronomia mou* (“my inheritance,” *Foreign Nations*, 89; *Wisdom of Ben Sira*, 330).
 - 27 The Hebrew C Manuscript. See discussion and footnotes in Skehan and Di Lella, *Wisdom of Ben Sira*, 52–4; Jeremy Corley, “An Alternative Hebrew Form of Ben Sira: The Anthological Manuscript C,” in *Texts and Versions of Ben Sira: Transmission and Interpretation* (ed. Jean-Sébastien Rey and Jan Joosten; JSJS 150; Leiden: Brill, 2011), 1–22; Pancratius C. Beentjes, “Hermeneutics in the Book of Ben Sira: Some Observations on the Hebrew Ms. C,” in idem, *Happy the One Who Meditates on Wisdom (SIR. 14,20): Collected Essays on the Book of Ben Sira* (CBET 43; Leuven: Peeters, 2006), 333–47.
 - 28 There is a debate over whether *Sira* 36 is a later insertion, and not composed by the sage himself. A recap of the issues can be found in Marttila, *Foreign Nations*, 124–30.
 - 29 *r š p’ty mw’b* probably denotes the rulers of Moab. See Skehan and DiLella, *Wisdom*, 412; Marttila, *Foreign Nations*, 142.
 - 30 Skehan and Di Lella, *Wisdom of Ben Sira*, 421. The suggestion that *kol- gôyîm* should be translated “all the Gentiles” does not fit with the use of *ethnē allotria* in 36:3.
 - 31 The expression *gôy nēkār* appears in 4QpNahum.
 - 32 For evidence that Ben Sira engaged apocalyptic traditions, see Marttila, *Foreign Nations*, 126.
 - 33 John J. Collins, “Apocalyptic Genre and Mythic Allusions in Daniel,” *JSOT* 21 (1981): 90–4.
 - 34 It is unclear whether “holy ones” here refers to people or divine beings. I am inclined to think that it refers to divine beings, since Dan 7:27 refers to the “people of the holy ones.” Yet, in Deut 33:2–3, “holy ones” refers to the divine beings part of Yahweh’s theophany, as well as the people.
 - 35 See Chapter Three, pp. 77–8.
 - 36 Matthew Goff, “The Foolish Nation That Dwells in Shechem,” in *The “Other” in Second Temple Period Judaism: Essays in Honor of John J. Collins* (ed. Daniel C. Harlow, et al. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2011), 178–9. See also my comments on Deut 32:21 in Chapter Five.
 - 37 Gen 32:6; 36:8–20; Num 24:18; Deut 2:4–29; Josh 24:4; Judg 5:4; Ezek 35:2–15. For more on the nation of Edom and Israel’s relationship with it, see Chapter Five.

- 38 Though the Greek translation does not mention Edom.
- 39 What “Idumea in Akra Battene” (*tē Idymaia tēn Akra battēnēn*) means is uncertain. Josephus places the toparchy of Akra Battene near Shechem in Samaritan territory (*BJ* 2.235; 3.48; 4.551), which would have been far from biblical Edom. Others wish to relate Idumea in Akra Battene to the Ascent of Akra Bim in Num 34:4, which is further south.
- 40 For more information on Philistia and the Philistines, see Chapter Five. Biblical scholars vigorously debate the origins of the Philistines and other “sea peoples.” Most likely, they did come from the Aegean Sea region.
- 41 See discussion in Goldstein, *1 Maccabees*, 260.
- 42 Goff, “Foolish Nations,” 175–83. Not everyone agrees that Ben Sira references Samaritans here (Reinhard Pummer, *The Samaritans in Flavius Josephus* [TSAJ 129; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009], 9–11).
- 43 *Ibid.*, 177.
- 44 *Ibid.*, 179–80.
- 45 Though not every single portrayal of the Shechemites in the Bible is wholly negative (Gen 33:18–19). The city of Shechem was also an important cultic and political site in Israelite history (e.g., Gen 12:6; Josh 24; Judg 9; 1 Kgs 12:1, 25).
- 46 Most, but perhaps not all. 2 Macc 5:22–3; 6:1–2 may present Jews and Samaritans as the same “people” (Pummer, *The Samaritans*, 12–15). Compare Matt 10:5–6; 17:11–19; John 4:4–42.
- 47 See discussion in Winston, *Wisdom*, 20–5.
- 48 There may be sexual undertones here, referring to rites such as the Bacchanalia, which Roman moralists such as Livy alleged involved extraordinarily perverse orgies in the name of the god, Bacchus (note the reference to Dionysus in verse 5). While there is no good evidence of so-called “cultic prostitution” or religious orgies from the ancient Near East, the Greek and Roman literature is full of *accusations* of such practices among foreign peoples. Livy, in particular, partially blames the “effeminacy of the [Asian] enemy” for the Romans falling into such religious practices, which were introduced by a “low-born Greek.” Livy also calls the Bacchanalia a “foreign superstition.” See discussion in Winston, *Wisdom*, 238–9; Livy, *History of Rome*, 39.1ff.
- 49 Winston, *Wisdom*, 240.
- 50 Translated so because of Matt 1:1.
- 51 As noted by Winston, *Wisdom*, 241.
- 52 Chapter Three, 61–3, 72–74. Compare Wis 12:5.
- 53 *matatoi men gar pantes anthrōpoi physei, hois parēn theou agnosia* (“For all humans are foolish by nature, for whom ignorance of God is present...”). Taking the relative pronoun *hois* as having the force of a demonstrative pronoun with a connective.
- 54 See Stanley K. Stowers, *A Rereading of Romans: Justice, Jews and Gentiles* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), 178–6.
- 55 Hodge, *If Sons*, 48–9.
- 56 Chapter Four, pp. 153–4.
- 57 A discussion of whether or not Paul subscribes to a “two covenants” viewpoint in which there are two different paths to salvation for Jews and Gentiles is beyond the scope of this chapter. John G. Gager has a succinct review of this perspective in *Reinventing Paul* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 57–61. Paul, at the very least, appears to argue that Jews must recognize the sovereignty of Jesus

Christ as the Messiah. By refusing to do so, they are disobeying God. For another view on what salvation through Jesus Christ means for Jews, see Hodge, *If Sons*, 152. She argues that Paul was:

a voice within first-century Judaism, who interpreted but also shaped the story of Israel to accommodate the ethnic and religious “other.” According to Paul, the salvation of Israel depends upon this accommodation, which is prophesied in scripture and made possible through Christ. In Paul’s strategic telling, the spirit creates a divinely sanctioned kinship which links the gentile peoples to Christ, and through him to the lineage to which God has committed himself through promises and covenants.

- 58 Compare especially the Hellenistic “Epistle of Jeremiah” (Baruch 6), an explicit reinterpretation of Jeremiah 10. In this text, the author repeatedly exclaims that idols are *not* gods (Ep Jer 16, 29–30, 40, 44, 47, 49–52, 56, 59, 64–5, 72). Because the “Epistle of Jeremiah” is oriented to Jeremiah 10, it focuses on Babylonian idols, but Ep Jer 73 shows that the text is a general anti-idolatry polemic: “Better, therefore, is a righteous man who has no idols; for he will be far from reproach.” The “Epistle of Jeremiah” is notoriously difficult to date, but most scholars agree it can be no earlier than the fourth century BCE (Sean A. Adams, *Baruch and the Epistle of Jeremiah: A Commentary Based on the Texts in Codex Vaticanus* [Leiden: Brill 2014], 148–50).
- 59 Compare Ben Witherington III, who argues that “God’s wrath is seen not so much in what he does, but in what he allows to happen” (*Paul’s Letter to the Romans: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* [with Darlene Hyatt; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2004], 65) with Stowers, who emphasizes “God’s action,” noting that *paradidōmi* “evokes the metaphor of delivering a person into someone else’s control or power but in the negative sense that the word had of handing someone over to be tortured or to be sent to prison, the police, or to the courts of law” (*Rereading of Romans*, 93).
- 60 Stowers, *Rereading of Romans*, 42–82.
- 61 See Chapter Five, 153–54 for an explication of “hereditary punishment,” as well as n. 9.
- 62 Though the use of *akatharsia* and *akathartos* in the Holiness Code is interesting. These words almost exclusively appear in reference to ritual impurity (Lev 17:15; 19:23; 20:25; 22:3–6; 27:11, 27). There is one notable exception, Lev 20:21, in which *akatharsia* is used to translate *niddā*, in reference to an illicit sexual relationship (a man taking his brother’s wife).
- 63 Jer 10:6–8 does not appear in LXX, the version Paul most likely would have read, but the theme of Gentile insolence appears in a variety of Hellenistic Jewish texts. Since the *Vorlage* of MT is attested at Qumran, it is possible that the MT’s reading may have been known by some in the Roman period. On the different versions of Jeremiah, see n. 2 above.
- 64 Robert Jewett, *Romans: A Commentary* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2006), 152–3.
- 65 Witherington, *Paul’s Letter*, 80; Joseph A. Fitzmeyer, *Romans: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB 33; New York: Doubleday, 1993), 270–7.
- 66 Witherington, *Paul’s Letter*, 85–96.

- 67 Linebaugh, *God, Grace and Righteousness*, 48–52.
 - 68 Hodge, *If Sons*, 101.
 - 69 Some argue that it refers to mistreating the temples of non-Jews. Witherington argues that it may refer to pilfering sacrificial meat from non-Jewish temples offered to other gods.
 - 70 Philo, *On the Confusion of Languages*, 163. Noted in Witherington, *Paul's Letter to the Romans*, 90 n. 12.
 - 71 See also LXX Deut 7:26 where both the nominal and verbal forms are used: “You shall utterly abominate it (*bdelygmati bdelyxē*)”
 - 72 Chapter Six, pp. 186–89.
 - 73 *harmartōloi ex ethnōn*. Taking Hodge’s cogent argument that *ek* + genitive denotes descent (*If Sons*, 79–91).
 - 74 Stowers suggests that some of the viewpoints found in 4 Ezra and 2 Baruch, which were composed in the second century CE, stem from pessimism that developed in Jewish literary circles after the destruction of the Temple in 70 CE (*Rereading*, 87–8). Stowers says that this pessimism is the basis for 4 Ezra’s and 2 Baruch’s emphasis on the primeval effects of Adam’s sin (4 Ezra 3:5–10; 2 Bar 4:3)—something that should not be read into Paul. Stowers argues that Jewish writers did not “connect sinfulness with primeval sin” but rather viewed Adam as part of a human cycle of sin and decline. Though Paul wrote before 66 CE, he does believe in immanent divine judgment (1 Thess 1:10), which may mean that he shares somewhat the pessimism of 4 Ezra and 2 Baruch, even if he does not fully share their totalizing view of Adam’s sin. Stowers contends that Paul’s views on Adam’s sin are closer to the views of Wisdom of Solomon, Ben Sira and Philo of Alexandria. Paul certainly drew on themes also found in these texts, and while these texts contain some apocalyptic references, they seem to be less apocalyptic in overall outlook than Paul’s letters. Perhaps one could argue that Paul stands between the two tendencies.
 - 75 For a response to those who see Jewish idolatry as a theme in Romans 1, particularly arguments based on supposed parallels with LXX Psalms 105:20, see Stowers, *Rereading*, 92–3.
 - 76 Hodge, *If Sons*, 138–41.
 - 77 Stowers, pointing to Rom 2:5, which says that the Gentiles have “stored up wrath,” argues that Israel has its own means of atonement (*Rereading*, 106–7).
 - 78 See Hodge, *If Sons*, 106, 141. Hodge notes that unity in Christ:

does not erase differences. In any patrilineal descent group which might claim a corporate identity as descendants of a common ancestor, there are still hierarchies among the members: heads of households, sons, daughters, first-born, last-born, and so on. Unity based on kinship and social differences coexist (106).
- See also discussion of distributive justice in Bruno Blumenfeld, *The Political Paul: Justice, Democracy and Kingship in a Hellenistic Framework* (JSNTSup 210; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 2001), 129–32.
- 79 An expression that can also have familial and kinship implications, as Hodge points out (*If Sons*, 103–6).
 - 80 Chapter Five, p. 162.
 - 81 Hodge, *If Sons*, 89.
 - 82 *Ibid.*, 104.

“IN ORDER THAT I MIGHT HORRIFY THEM”

A theological appraisal

The texts we have reviewed in the last four chapters pose significant theological problems for contemporary Jewish and Christian interpreters. Exegetes from a variety of traditions within Judaism and Christianity—conservatives and liberals—recognize the ethical conundrums posed by these texts. Depending on the tradition, theologians employ diverse interpretative tactics to explain the presence of these passages in sacred Scripture. For those who believe that the text of the Bible was dictated by God and is inerrant, the main issue is how a good God could order the destruction of men, women and children. God orders Israel to violate well-established modern principles of human rights, including the universal condemnation of genocide and racism—though we do not necessarily practice what we preach. Consequently, it is difficult to reconcile God’s goodness with the horrendous evils that Israel’s God is said to enthusiastically promote in Scripture.

The theological conundrum does not just touch those who have conservative views of Scripture. If Jews and Christians of all kinds accept that the people who wrote the Hebrew Bible were indeed the people of God, and had a relationship with the true and living God, how could God’s people have endorsed these horrific practices? These passages are troubling not just because they pose problems for abstract theological propositions about the goodness of God, either. As is well known, Christians—and to a much lesser extent, historically speaking, Jews—have used these verses for nefarious ends. Biblical passages that promote the mistreatment of foreigners have been invoked by European, Christian societies to justify the slaughter of Native Americans, the enslavement of Africans and the brutal colonization and imperial domination of other nations. The first part of this chapter will look at some twentieth- and twenty-first century theological interpretations of the negative portrayals of foreigners in the Bible. We will assess the strengths and weaknesses of these theological interpretations and try to understand these texts in light of our current ethical values.

The second part of this chapter will attempt to link some theological lessons drawn from the Bible’s xenophobic texts with the contemporary social and political crisis in North America and Europe. As of this writing, the United

States and Europe are deeply divided over foreignness and ethnicity—to put it mildly. Debates on immigration and the core cultural-national “identity” of the US and European nation states rage on. The resurgence of far-right populist and fascist movements both in North America and Europe demonstrates the need for modern, Western societies to address these questions with lucidity, clarity and moral “oomph.” As liberalism struggles to contend with the current crisis, the synagogue and the church—institutions that hold the Hebrew Bible to be sacred Scripture—can play a role in anchoring ethical, pragmatic responses to the current fractures that permeate Western societies.

Theological responses to xenophobic scripture

“Honorary Israelites”?

A very common way to respond to these disturbing polemical verses is to look to examples in which Scripture mentions non-Israelites in positive or neutral contexts to problematize and even neutralize those passages that are hostile to foreigners. Interpreters point to Rahab the *zōnā*, who is from the Canaanite city of Jericho, Uriah the Hittite, the Cherethites and Pelethites (Philistine mercenaries in the service of King David), references to “one law for the resident alien (*gēr*) and the native,” the book of Ruth, Isa 56:3–4, or the character of Achior in the book of Judith, as examples of the “inclusion” of foreigners. Once in a while a character such as Uriah the Hittite may even be presented as more virtuous than Israelites. Uriah, whose name suggests he is a Yahweh worshipper, was the undeserving victim of a murder orchestrated by King David because David wanted to cover up his adulterous affair with Uriah’s wife. Hittites are often listed among the Canaanite groups with which Israelites are not to have any relationship, making Uriah’s loyalty and blamelessness even more powerful. Even if the story predates Deuteronomistic injunctions against the Canaanites, it is placed within the Deuteronomistic History, making the story clash with the anti-Canaanite, anti-Hittite rhetoric elsewhere in the corpus.¹ But the foreignness of Uriah may have served more to highlight David’s depravity rather than make a comment about the virtue of foreigners.

There is a sociological problem with an interpretation that claims positive portrayals of foreigners undermine the Bible’s xenophobic rhetoric, however. The inclusion of certain foreigners in biblical passages no more undermines anti-foreigner sentiment in the Bible as a whole than “honorary whites” undermined the ideology of apartheid South Africa, “honorary Aryans” undermined the racist ideology of the Third Reich, or “civilized tribes” undermined violence against Native Americans. There is no moral equivalency between the ethnic polemics contained in the Bible and apartheid or Nazism, of course.² The point is that even the most odious and monstrous examples of racism and ethnic hierarchy allow for “exceptions to the rule.” As discussed

in Chapter Two, the mental process of categorization allows for people to think of ethnic groups as comprising both stereotypes and exceptions.³ The presence of exceptions usually does not shake overall negative stereotypes of a group, because someone can continually rationalize positive or putatively atypical representatives of the stereotyped group as aberrations. This is one of the most fascinating and disturbing aspects of ethnic hierarchies. Ethnicity's nature as something fixed in the minds of participants combined with the reality that ethnic group boundaries are fluid, requires both individuals and social structures to be flexible when they communicate and enforce ethnic group boundaries. A certain level of flexibility can, predictably, be found in various ethnic hierarchies. Consequently, it takes more than “exceptions to the rule” or the inclusion of certain non-Israelites into the polity of ancient Israel (e.g., Ruth, Rahab, the foreigners in Isa 56:4–5) to convincingly argue that xenophobic, polemical rhetoric has been undermined. In fact, a focus on “exceptions to the rule” can reinforce the boundaries and support the negative characterization of foreigners, because by highlighting the exceptions one draws more attention to the rule!

Because stereotypes and exceptions are a normal part of human categorization, the common practice of counterposing biblical themes of “inclusion” and “exclusion,” should be reevaluated.⁴ For example, to argue that the inclusion of some foreigners in Isa 56:4–5 means that it is an “inclusive passage”, downplays the fact that racist or bigoted worldviews can accommodate some levels of inclusion. Joel S. Kaminsky notes that simply juxtaposing inclusion and particularism is often unhelpful, rightly pointing out that many of the so-called “inclusive” passages in Scripture do not undermine the idea that Israel is elect and others are not-elect.⁵ His argument that the chosenness of Israel does not necessarily lead to mistreatment of all non-Israelites is well-taken, but one question he does not address fully is whether the idea of election necessarily leads to the assumed *inferiority* of non-Israelites. It appears as though, in many cases, it does. Throughout this book, we have seen that religion was a way in which Israel could credibly claim for itself—and to outsiders who would listen—the superiority of its people and civilization in a world where other nations were advanced in all of the other trappings of “civilized society.” We have also seen that some biblical and Hellenistic Jewish authors have concluded that foreigners are cognitively defective because of their worship of other deities. Consequently, “non-election” for most authors in the biblical tradition means inferiority.

Israel as underdog

Another way of responding to biblical texts that display negativity towards foreigners is to portray Israel as the underdog. This line of interpretation sees ancient Israel's polemics against Babylon, Assyria and Egypt and even the Canaanites as a form of rhetorical resistance to more powerful civilizations.

According to some biblical scholars, the Canaanites were not militarily weaker, indigenous peoples akin to Native Americans but advanced, wealthy, corrupt urban societies aligned with Egypt.⁶ If we accept this interpretation, then we can argue that while the ancient Israelite polemical response to foreigners is distasteful for modern, liberal sensibilities, it is nevertheless understandable, and maybe even heroic for its particular historical context. In conjunction with post-colonial readings of the Bible, the polemical rhetoric can be seen as acts of resistance in the face of a conquering, hegemonic empire. Even the deeply violent rhetoric deployed against Canaanites, in the context of the brutality of the ancient Near East, could be read as a reaction to domination and oppression. The Israelites were resisting the corrupt, urban religion of the Canaanites which threatened the Israelites' tribal, monolatrous devotion to their God.

Obviously, Babylon, Assyria and Egypt were more powerful than ancient Israel, but to portray the Canaanites as more powerful than the Israelites, one would have to take the biblical text at face value in some places and accept some problematic historical reconstructions of the development of ancient Israel. Some passages do portray the Canaanites as more powerful than ancient Israel (e.g., Deut 1:28; Num 13:25–33), but was this the case? As I argued in Chapter Five, people who were identified as “Canaanites” may have actually lived in ancient Israel—irrespective of the fact that the biblical account of the conquest of Canaan is ahistorical.⁷ Examples from the Persian Period and Hellenistic period, cited in Chapter Seven, also show that the ethnic appellatives used need not have been strictly historical. In some literary circles, identifying people with historically maligned groups such as the Canaanites, Philistines and Shechemites was a way to marginalize them. People identified as “Canaanites” were marginalized and possibly subjected to violence, enslavement and forced labor by Israelite and Judahite kings. Additionally, much of the Deuteronomistic corpora, a set of texts containing extraordinarily violent rhetoric, developed during a time in which Judah sought to become a local, regional power. Josiah, a biblical king presented as a new “Joshua” by the Deuteronomistic tradition and one who presided over a wealthier, locally hegemonic Judah, would have had the capacity to engage in the kinds of slaughter that the texts describe.

Insofar as drawing practical theological conclusions for contemporary times, considering the problematic historical issues raised above, appealing to biblical rhetoric showing the Canaanites or others as more powerful does not necessarily render these texts less toxic. Indeed, throughout history it has been common to see oppressed people as more powerful than they actually are, making acts of oppression and violence acts of “self-defense.”⁸ Most important, the Deuteronomistic tradition does not say that Yahweh ordered the Israelites to exterminate the Canaanites because of their more powerful economic or military status. The stated rationale is that their religious practices pose a threat to the proper worship of Yahweh. Even in scenarios

in which the Canaanites have been subdued, the Deuteronomistic tradition at times insists they remain a threat.

A matter of survival

It has been common for interpreters to explain the polemical discourse against foreigners in the Bible as a matter of “survival” of the Israelites, or Jews and group cohesion. Kaminsky notes that some believe anti-Canaanite texts “might have arisen among the exiles as a strategy for maintaining social and religious identity by constructing that identity in contrast to either the Babylonians among whom the exiles lived or the Judeans who were not removed from the land.”⁹ The “survival” explanation is a cousin of the “underdog” explanation, in that it does not necessarily approve of the violence or polemical rhetoric against ethnic groups that is portrayed in the Bible, but tries to render it understandable in its historical context. According to this line of argumentation, the pressing need to preserve Israel’s distinctive identity in the face of extreme outside pressures explains the highly charged xenophobic sentiment in the Bible. This is a compelling sociological explanation, but a lousy ethical one. The contemporary theological problem with using survival as an explanation is that it can serve as a never-ending rationalization, as Jon D. Levenson points out:

At its worst, the absolutization of Jewish survival leads to the denial of ethical constraints on a Jewry in danger. And since Jewry is usually in danger, this grants the Jews a moral *carte blanche*—quite the reverse of the biblical intent.¹⁰

Like the “underdog” argument, the perception that a group’s survival is at stake is highly subjective, and history suggests that such perceptions are not to be trusted. Many atrocities have been committed in the name of “survival” of a particular group.¹¹ Again, to use an extreme example, the Nazi regime believed that European civilization was under mortal attack by Jews and, to a lesser extent, other foreigners. The sloppy, broad-brushed attacks on Islam have been defended as a matter of the survival for Western Civilization. Also, a number of racist, exclusionary Zionists have used the “survival” of the state of Israel as a justification of their violent, cruel anti-Palestinian nationalism. Many racists in the United States ludicrously claim that whites are facing extinction and “genocide.”

Because explanations based on survival cannot be trusted, appealing to “survival” is an inadequate theological or ethical explanation for anti-foreigner sentiment in the Bible. Certainly, an interpreter can propose that a biblical author *perceived* that the ethnic group’s survival was at stake, but the scholarly theologian must maintain a critical stance with respect to this perception.

Outright justification

One can detect discomfort, even in conservative circles, with asserting that violently xenophobic passages come from the mouth of God or reflect God’s will. Nevertheless, some interpreters—usually Christians dedicated to the doctrine of biblical inerrancy—insist that the commands to slaughter the Canaanites or Amalekites are truly the words of a just God. Yes, these commentators assert that the command to kill men, women and children was a just command from the mouth of God, but the justice of it is simply incomprehensible to lowly humans. Evangelical biblical scholar Eugene H. Merrill writes:

The issue, then, cannot be whether or not genocide is intrinsically good or evil—its sanction by a holy God settles the question. Rather, the issue has to do with the purpose of genocide, its initiator and the particular circumstances of its application...biblical genocide was a part of Yahweh-war policy enacted for a unique situation, directed against a certain people, and in line with the character of God himself, a policy whose design is beyond human comprehension but one that is not, for that reason, unjust or immoral. Those very limitations preclude any possible justification for modern genocide for any reason.¹²

I object, in the strongest possible way, to Merrill’s notion that the morality of genocide is not “the issue.” That is the *very* issue! We can see just how unsound this argument is when we attempt to apply his interpretation to the modern world. By “unique situation” and “limitations,” Merrill means that ancient Israel was the only nation authorized to carry out genocidal violence because it was “the elect people of God, chosen not just to mediate the message of salvation to the world, but also to serve as his agent in bringing to pass his will on earth.”¹³ But Merrill does not say why ancient Israel alone could be called to act as God’s agent. What prevents a modern state from claiming to serve as God’s instrument on earth—especially if that state claims to be facing a uniquely depraved and evil enemy? Merrill appeals to the questionable theology of “dispensationalism”¹⁴ to deny the morality of genocide in the present day, but he nowhere explains why the current age necessarily rules out genocide as a tactic. In fact, Merrill undermines his own argument by pointing out that Christians can be called upon to take up arms to act violently on behalf of the state.¹⁵ War can even be a “means of achieving God’s eschatological purposes” and appealing to the Apostle Paul he further argues that “the believer must take sword in hand in the defense of home and country in recognition of the fact that the [human] authorities that exist have been authorized by God” (Rom 13:1).

The idea that the modern state *can* be an agent of God blurs the dispensational lines Merrill draws between the era of ancient Israel and contemporary

times. If even pagan empires such as imperial Rome—an extraordinarily violent state—can be instruments of God’s will, at least according to Paul (Rom 13:1–7), how much more so would a “Christian” state be? The same problem plagues Tremper Longman III’s view that though God acted as a divine warrior in the past, “no longer is the battle against flesh-and-blood enemies, but rather is directed toward the spiritual powers and authorities.”¹⁶ For Longman, there was a transition from physical to spiritual warfare with the advent of Jesus Christ. Longman does not articulate a reason that a modern state cannot, under any circumstances, act as an agent of God’s “spiritual” agenda via extreme violence against certain peoples. Longman’s assertion depends on an untenable, dualistic juxtaposition of the “spiritual” and the “physical,” which runs into problems if we ask how the “spiritual” concretely manifests itself “physically.” Since Christians live in the physical world, the spiritual necessarily has socio-political implications. Longman punts on this; he does not propose that Christians adopt an apolitical quietism, nor does he explain how Christians, with their “spiritual” outlook, should relate to “earthly” powers and authorities.

Daniel L. Gard, another evangelical biblical scholar writing in the same volume defends the violence against the Canaanites because it anticipates the apocalyptic violence that God will inflict at the end of days. Similar to Merrill, Gard argues that genocide cannot be justified today. Israel’s position was unique and cannot be applied to modern times, Gard asserts. Then, also like Merrill, he undermines his own argument by noting that Christians must act violently on behalf of the state, because “God can grant human rulers the sword of justice.”¹⁷ Gard insists that the state must act with justice, but since neither he nor Merrill can unequivocally state that genocide is unjust, because a “its sanction by a holy God settles the question,” can we really trust a sense of “justice” derived solely from readings of biblical passages?

Conservative interpreters claim that the “morality” of genocide in the Bible is simply incomprehensible,¹⁸ and a reflection of God’s “mysterious ways.” On the contrary, this kind of violence is, in fact, quite comprehensible, and even commonplace.¹⁹ Appeals to ancient Israel’s uniqueness and the incomprehensibility of these biblical horrors sound out of touch with the ancient Near East where many nations claimed to be executing the will of their deity when they displayed extreme violence against other peoples. One poignant example of how such violence was commonplace is the Mesha Stele, upon which the king of Moab bragged about executing *hērem* against Israel. Furthermore, as we have seen throughout this book, the Hebrew Bible follows a common pattern of polemical, ethnic discourse that highlights sexual practices, religion and “barbarism” of foreigners to justify extermination, enslavement or conquest. To suggest that the biblical text, though following the same patterns of denigrating outsiders that appear throughout history were accurate in their portrayal of the Canaanites, but all of the other polemical discourse against foreigners throughout history was an expression of illegitimate prejudice or

ideology, strains credibility. As ethnic violence, ancient Israel’s cruel rhetoric is no divine mystery; it is a way that human beings have, to our shame, been acting for millennia.

The idea that the extermination of the Canaanites is morally justified has been a wellspring of horrors. The clearest examples of the destructive aftermath of this interpretation involve the use of Scripture against Native Americans.²⁰ With respect to native peoples in the Americas, European conquerors cast Native peoples in the light of the biblical Canaanites recounting harrowing tales of their depraved culture which, like the Canaanites, included human sacrifice. Many pro-slavery authors also identified blacks with Canaanites to legitimate their enslavement. The sexual depravity attributed to blacks as well as their connection with the lineage of Ham made them fit to be slaves.²¹

The reason that these passages are a rich ideological source for ethnic violence cannot be understood simply as the “misuse” of Scripture. By accepting the xenophobia of these texts at face value, the reader authorizes this way of understanding ethnic groups. The unethical nature of these passages is expressed not just in the promotion of extreme physical violence against foreigners, though that is bad enough. These passages are also repellent because the polemics involve the stereotyping and collective demonization of an ethnic group. The conservative Christian authors discussed above clearly assert—without convincing justification—that the kind of extreme violence supported in Scripture does not apply to modern times. They did not, however, talk about how this way of conceptualizing ethnic groups is inherently toxic and dehumanizing. In this light, Longman’s assertion that the children of the Canaanites “are all part of an inherently wicked culture that if allowed to live would morally and theologically pollute the people Israel” becomes downright frightening.²² Genocide via killing is not the only form of violence that one can levy against a particularly maligned and despised ethnic group. Other forms of violence include conquest, occupation, imperial domination, erasure of an ethnic group’s cultural practices and history, enslavement or other forms of forced labor, residential segregation, police repression and so on. Believing that the Bible’s portrayal of the Canaanites was warranted and that Yahweh’s pronouncements were just, legitimates stigmatizing, caricaturing polemical discourse against foreigners. The texts suggest that some peoples, including their children and infants, by virtue of their ethnic background, can become incorrigibly corrupt, and inherently sinful.

Appeals to Christ

Another popular way of dealing with xenophobic passages in liberal Christian circles is to appeal to Jesus Christ. Christians who recognize the deeply offensive, unethical nature of xenophobic passages in the Hebrew Bible, often claim that Christ’s teachings to love one’s enemies, to turn the other cheek, and to show compassion and mercy refute the terrifying messages of *hērem*

and extermination. Scripture must be interpreted in the light of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the basis of which is “law of love.” Consequently, genocide and all ethnic violence are absolutely incompatible with the Gospel, as C.S. Cowles argues:

The vengeful spirit that dehumanizes, depersonalizes, and demonizes a whole town or city or nation is not of God. The God revealed in Jesus never has been and never will be party to genocide of any sort, for “God is love” (1 John 4:8). “God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world,” John reminds us, “but to save the world through him” (John 3:17).²³

This is a compelling argument, especially considering that Jesus treats people such as the Syro-Phoenician/Canaanite woman (Matt 15:21–8; Mark 7:24–30) and Samaritans (Luke 10:25–37) with some measure of respect. The latter example, the story of the so-called “good Samaritan,” could be seen as paradigmatic of how people should understand especially maligned foreigners—precisely because it is a parable. Samaritans, understood by many Jews as a people who worship God in an incorrect fashion, were sometimes cast as Canaanites (Sir 50:25–6; *Ant.* 11.19–20, 82–8, 340–4²⁴), and deceitful by nature (*Ant.* 9.290–1; 11.341; 12.257). The explicitly fictional nature of this parable²⁵ makes Jesus’s portrayal of the “good Samaritan” not a description of what “is,” but a statement of what “ought” to be. To put it another way, by employing the genre of the parable, Jesus models the use of ethical imagination. By employing fiction in no uncertain terms, Jesus signals that, in order to answer complex theological questions such as those posed by ethnic bigotry, we must employ our own *imagination* to press the boundaries of what seems to be possible and our own limitations.

This specific parable does not promote the accommodation of outsiders for the purpose of an imperial vision, nor does it suggest that the Samaritan should be accommodated for pragmatic purposes. There is, in my reading, no obvious ethnocentrism. The Samaritan does not change his ethnicity, nor does he break into praise for Israel and its religious traditions (compare Isa 56:6–7; Dan 2:47; Jdt 14:6–10). The Samaritan retains his Samaritan appellation and presumably his religious practices; he does not “convert” in any sense. Perhaps, then, “good Samaritans” are not simply exceptions to the rule, which is one of the reasons I believe that labeling this parable, “the Good Samaritan” does not convey its full theological potential. Many marginalized people have heard that they are “one of the good ones”—someone who defies stereotypes and is an exception to the normally expected (read: inferior) behavior of their fellow ethnic group members. Rather, this parable questions the “rules” themselves, by showing that what is most important is displaying compassion to others, not belonging to the “right” religion or the “right” people.

Jesus’s apocalypticism is a snag for those who want to use this parable as a basis for humane, ethical theology. Gard, discussed above, does make an interesting point in that violence in the Hebrew Bible may have a connection with apocalyptic violence in the New Testament. Jesus himself claims that he will preside over the violence that will usher in God’s eschatological kingdom (Mark 13; Luke 21; Matthew 24). Additionally, in the contemporary world in which religion serves as an ethnic marker, references to “the elect” in the Gospels can be mapped onto modern societies and ethnic groups that happen to embrace Christianity; the idea of Christian “exceptionalism” can easily buttress American (or British, or Spanish, or European) exceptionalism.

The brutality of the divine violence in the Gospels becomes even more stark if interpreted through the eschatological visions of the Apostle Paul²⁶ and Apocalypse of John. This is where Cowles’s argument falters; he must eventually resort to supersessionism and a dubious juxtaposition of “Old” and New Testaments to respond to violence and xenophobia in the Hebrew Bible.²⁷ He conflates the example of Jesus in the Gospels with the New Testament as a whole, when there are also plenty of New Testament passages that pose ethical problems, especially with respect to ethnic violence. Cowles must claim that divine punishments such as Hell or God’s punishment in Rom 1:24–7 are self-imposed: “God does not judge sinners proactively...Those who do not believe in the Son are allowed to exercise their moral freedom and are left in their natural state of spiritual darkness and death.”²⁸ In reality, these texts show that God actively imposes punishments on those who disobey and the Gentiles as a whole.²⁹ To interpret God’s active imposition of penalties in these passages as passivity goes beyond what the literal words of the text convey and should be recognized as a complete reinterpretation.

One could argue that even other New Testament passages need to be interpreted through the example of Jesus Christ in order to temper the apocalyptic violence and polemical ethnic discourse found therein. It remains a difficulty, however, that the letters of Paul, the earliest New Testament Scriptures—and the first extant articulations of what we call “the Gospel”—follow in many of the same disturbing xenophobic traditions of other passages in the Bible. Consequently, appealing to “the Gospel” alone seems insufficient to deal with the multiple problems raised by anti-foreigner texts. And we cannot take a critical view of the Hebrew Bible and then engage in uncritical and quasi-fundamentalist readings of the New Testament or the Gospels.

Molek as metaphor: reinterpreting ethnic polemics

In Chapters Five and Six, I mentioned the accusation some biblical writers levied against the indigenous inhabitants of the land that they sacrificed their own children to their gods. The Deuteronomistic tradition vehemently denies that Israelites ever sacrificed children for Yahweh (Deut 12:29–31; 18:10–14).

Jeremiah, like the Deuteronomistic writers, also fiercely denies that child sacrifice was an indigenous Israelite cult practice. Jeremiah writes:

...the people have forsaken me and made this place foreign (*yěnakkěřû*) by making offerings in it to other gods, whom neither they nor their fathers, nor the kings of Judah have known...and have built the high places of “the Lord”³⁰ (*habba’al*) to burn their children in the fire as burnt offerings to “the Lord,” which I did not command or speak, nor did it come into my mind (Jer 19:4–5; also 7:31; 32:32–3).

I noted in Chapter Five³¹ that when Deuteronomistic authors declare insistently that Yahweh most certainly did not command something, it is an indication that a significant number of Israelites believed that Yahweh did command the practice. And it does appear as though a form of child sacrifice at one time was an ancient Israelite practice, as it was among other “Canaanite” peoples, such as Carthaginians. As the practice fell out of favor in Israelite circles, some biblical authors denied that such a practice was ever a part of Israel’s religious heritage.

Ezekiel, on the other hand, argues that Yahweh did command this grisly practice at one time, but it was because of the Israelites’ disobedience, even in the land of Egypt, that prompted Yahweh to command it:

I even gave statutes to them that were not good, and with which they could not live. I defiled them with their own gifts by causing them to pass through [fire] every [child] that opens the womb, that I might devastate them and they might know that I am Yahweh (Ezek 20:25).

One prophet, Jeremiah, denies that Yahweh ever commanded child sacrifice at all; the other prophet, Ezekiel shockingly argues that child sacrifice (at least the sacrifice of the “firstborn”) is one among a number of “not good” statutes commanded by Yahweh in the past. Both prophets see child sacrifice as a profound evil, but one sees it as a foreign cult practice while the other acknowledges its indigenous roots.

Jeremiah and Ezekiel, I would argue, serve as examples for different responses to unsettling, unethical practices, beliefs and ideas found in faith traditions. The “Jeremiah approach” to unethical religious texts and traditions is to deny that these things are authentic. It is the approach that claims that violence, horror, ethnic bigotry, xenophobia and sexism are not really a part of our tradition. It is the approach that says that Ku Klux Klan members, those who promoted slavery in the Western Hemisphere, and those who subjugated and murdered indigenous peoples were not “true” Christians and were “misreading” the Bible.

Indeed, the Jeremiah approach to religious evil expresses the revulsion that many religious people have towards evil, immoral manifestations of their

religion. We are so repulsed by evil religious ideas and practices that we excise them, deny their connection to our own practices, our God, our texts and our theology. To put it another way, like the Deuteronomists and Jeremiah, we render these ideas alien and foreign. The problem with the Jeremiah approach is that it is often less than completely honest. The Jeremiah approach locates the problems outside of our tradition, which permits us to ignore, skirt around, or in the flimsiest and most unconvincing fashion “explain away” texts that promote ethnic bigotry, misogyny or cruelty. Though there are certainly unethical cults, such as the “Christian Identity” movement, that radically distort scriptural passages outright, more often than not, unethical manifestations of religion usually engage in highly sophisticated exegesis and engagement of a particular tradition.

The “Ezekiel approach,” by contrast, accepts and attempts to explain. It engages the possibility that horrible texts and practices are indigenous, embedded parts of one’s religious tradition. The problem with the Ezekiel response is that the explanation often does not satisfy. Ezekiel 20:25 implies that Yahweh deliberately gave bad laws in order to punish the people. While Ezekiel accepts and explains the presence—or memory—of child sacrifice in ancient Israel, from our own vantage point in the twenty-first century, Yahweh does not act very ethically. Ezekiel’s explanation may have even been controversial among Judeans during the exile. After all, Jeremiah cannot countenance the idea that Yahweh would command such a thing. This is what makes the “Jeremiah response” so compelling. The alternative to denial is to draw uncomfortable conclusions about God, or at least one’s understanding of God.

Below, I take more of an “Ezekiel” approach. An Ezekiel approach makes more sense in the twenty-first century because in an era of empiricism and science, it is difficult to retell history the way that biblical writers did and still maintain intellectual good faith. The Deuteronomistic tradition and other biblical writers had a freer hand to re-narrate and rewrite the past, but a modern biblical scholar and theologian is constrained by different factors. We cannot reimagine history according to a perspective that is more ethical; we must accept the evidence and reconstruct a narrative of ancient Israel according to the best explanation of the totality of it. Consequently, I accept that the passages that negatively caricature foreigners or promote violence against them constitute a moral evil and that these verses are an intrinsic part of the rhetoric and narrative of the ancient Israelite textual tradition. I also believe that these sentiments made their way through the Hellenistic period and into the New Testament. I attempt to explain the existence of this moral evil in the Bible, but acknowledge that, like Ezekiel’s explanation, my interpretation might leave the reader unsatisfied. The conclusions I draw may have unsettling implications about God and God’s role in the world.

My proposal is that these polemics against ethnic foreigners could be an expression of a real relationship between God and God’s people. But like

many relationships, misapprehension is just as much a part of the relationship as understanding. An analogy with other intimate relationships might be helpful. Sometimes we misunderstand or misrepresent the people with whom we have an intimate relationship. We can attribute motives and ideas to those we love which may be false, especially if there is conflict or tension in the relationship. Ironically, the misunderstanding and misapprehension communicated by biblical writers can be seen as a testament to the very authenticity of their relationship with God. At the very least, misapprehension on the part of biblical authors, need not undermine one's belief that Scripture represents a real relationship between God and God's people. Getting it wrong—and in this case, they got it really wrong—is a part of being in a relationship.

As critical readers, Christians and Jews can still learn something about God from the failure of biblical writers to represent God ethically. The texts preserve *an* encounter with God even if we abhor their representation of God. The revulsion that a reader justifiably feels at the Canaanite conquest and the ethnic caricatures in Scripture, as well as all of the damage it has caused, should alert us to how dangerous these passages really are. Rabbis and pastors can encourage readers to channel the revulsion felt at these kinds of texts into a healthy fear of speaking for God. When one speaks for God, there are immense consequences. Perhaps all people of faith should be more reserved about putting words in God's mouth. To utter the statement, “thus saith the Lord” comes with immense risk; it is dangerous and can cause a great deal of harm. Misspeaking in the name of God also does profound damage to the community of God. While we can appreciate the social contexts that might have produced these ethically harmful texts, the horrific afterlife of these passages in the hands of Christians, at least, has sullied the Gospel and turned it into anathema in the ears of many.

Because Scripture does bear witness to the people of God's experiences with God (and all of the messy, unpleasant complications that come with that), there is always a lesson to be found, even if that lesson does not stem from the most literal reading of the text. It may be useful, when encountering an ethically problematic passage to ask, “What went wrong here?” Thinking about “what went wrong” is not something with a clear, unambiguous answer.

The idea that Scripture can be very wrong may cause anxiety for some believers. There is the deeper theological question of what kind of God would allow horrible things to be done in God's name. More to the point, what kind of God would allow divine Scripture to contain unethical pronouncements in God's own name? There is, among some Christians, the fear that disagreeing with the ethics of some Scriptural passages might lead the entire Christian theological edifice to collapse. By undermining some passages, will Scripture lose its power as a source for “reproof and correction” (2 Tim 3:16)? If we can disagree with one segment of the Bible, how can any of it be authoritative? Will readers not just conform Scripture to their own selfish desires?

Full answers to these questions would require a whole other book, and this chapter will not address all of those anxieties. I will just note one thing. Those who fear that criticizing biblical texts will lead to moral uncertainty should recognize that the “plain-sense” approach to reading Scripture has not delivered on the moral clarity its proponents claim it can provide. If the “plain-sense” approach could tame evil impulses the way its supporters claim it can, it should not have been so easy to use the Bible effectively in promoting ethnic violence and oppression. Christians who promoted racism and ethnic violence in the name of God emphatically stated that they were operating in this very tradition and relating the plain words of Scripture. Proslavery theologian, and preeminent southern Presbyterian minister, Robert L. Dabney accuses abolitionists of reading outside ideas into Scripture, or *eisegesis*, a charge often levied at liberal Christians today:

The flimsy character of the arguments based by the abolitionists on the Scriptures, betrays another than a biblical origin for their doctrines. They come primarily not from God’s word, but from “philosophy falsely so called;” the abolitionists, having determined on them in advance, are only concerned with the sacred records, to thrust them aside by quibbles and evasions. But the only sure and perfect rule of right is the Bible.³²

The “plain-sense” of Scripture is an illusion, and a polemical tactic deployed to disparage people with whom one has theological disagreements. Additionally, what good is such a view of Scripture when, as we have seen above, it does not even lead one to hold that genocide and slavery are evil in and of themselves? The fact that the conservative, evangelical interpreters above must contort themselves into knots in order to make a flimsy, equivocal case against *genocide*, of all things, exposes the problems with this way of engaging Scripture.

Though conservative interpreters may deny it, their humanistic reinterpretations of violently xenophobic texts in the Bible—that is, their impulse to explain away the genocide and ethnic violence of Scripture—does not flow from a “plain sense” reading of Scripture. The disturbing and inconsistent arguments of evangelical scholars noted above show that it is impossible to explain away Scripture’s support for genocide. Rather, the need to make biblical endorsements of genocide inoperable for the modern world is a consequence of living in a world in which these ideas have fallen out of favor. It seems as though the experience of two highly destructive world wars spawned by imperialism, as well as the legacy of several centuries of racial atrocities, including the Trans-Atlantic slave trade, the near-annihilation of Native Americans and the Holocaust, has prompted the Western world to reevaluate—however imperfectly and hypocritically—ethnic violence. Hence, the desire to reinterpret these genocidal biblical texts was not *dictated* by Scripture, but developed *in dialogue with* Scripture.³³ The moral opposition

to genocide developed organically in the bloody, brutal cauldron of Western history, and this moral insight prompted some to push back against biblical support for genocide, and racist, bigoted Christian use of these passages.

The fact that opposition to genocide developed organically, through historical experience, shows that readers must actively choose what the moral “essence” of Scripture entails. The moral “essence” of Scripture is not self-evident from a “plain-sense” reading, nor is it clearly dictated to the reader by a face-value interaction with Scripture. The reader must choose the ethical orientations which he or she bring to Scripture and that is what will lead someone to decide on “essential” matters. Furthermore, the vocabulary one uses for inhuman religious expressions must change. Rather than rendering toxic religion as inauthentic and foreign, it will suffice to simply say that these religious expressions are unethical or, to use the language of liberal theologian Paul Tillich, “demonic.”

A shift in vocabulary does not change the fact that the profoundly unethical resides within the deepest, oldest, “authentic” traditions of one’s faith. As Tillich puts it:

The holy which is demonic, or ultimately destructive, is identical with the content of idolatrous faith. Idolatrous faith is still faith. The holy which is demonic is still holy. This is the point where the ambiguous character of religion is most visible and the dangers of faith are most obvious: the danger of faith is idolatry and the ambiguity of the holy is its demonic possibility.³⁴

Christians and Jews must accept that other members of our traditions, in the deepest sincerity and piety, believed and continue to believe that *our* God and *our* Scriptures command them to do profound harm to other people. Most of the people who invoke our traditions for evil are “true” Christians, and “true” Jews (and “true” Israelites). The unethical misuse of Scripture cannot be equated with “misreading” Scripture. In fact, the unethical reading may be the more literal reading and closer to what these texts meant in their historic contexts. The demonic is embedded within our traditions, and it is something that must be exorcised with deliberation. Furthermore, we cannot deny the efficacy of the demonic and its seductive appeal. After all, people practiced child sacrifice because they believed it actually worked—and at least one biblical passage suggests that it did, in fact, work (2 Kgs 3:26–27)!

I do not accept that the God to Whom Scripture as a whole bears witness ever “commanded” people to commit genocide or enslave others. I do, however, believe that Scripture clearly condones unethical violence, in some parts and that these passages were composed by people who had a real and authentic relationship with God. They were ancient peoples who lived in an environment in which imperialism, cruelty and violence were an unquestioned part of their world. Trauma, stress, grappling with the cheapness and vagaries

of life, subsistence living, astronomical rates of infant, child and maternal mortality, low life expectancy and observing the capriciousness of rulers and the powerful, were all things that the biblical writers brought with them in their encounters with God.

Historical context matters in our assessment of our spiritual forbearers, not to excuse or explain away unethical passages, but to challenge modern readers. In an era in which all nations have agreed to principles of human rights and the equality of all races under the law, spelled out after two devastating world wars brought about by imperialism and the lust for global conquest and hegemony, we know better. Yes, the biblical writers were wrong, but in understanding their profound wrongness, the Bible shines a spotlight on our own iniquity. They lived in a world in which massacres were an accepted part of warfare, in which people rigidly divided the world into ethnic groups and in which societies did not have the technologies to produce and distribute food and basic needs to everyone. So, with all of our ethical, political and technological advancement, what now is *our* excuse? One could argue that contemporary peoples are *even more culpable* than ancient peoples because we do, indeed, know better. And yet, even in knowing better, our world is still shaking from ethnic violence and human rights abuses. Influenced by Ezekiel’s rhetoric (Ezek 20:25), I suggest that our unethical Scriptures as well as the horrible things Christians or Jews have done should “devastate” us and bring us to a point so that we have a better understanding of God. Instead of deflection, denial and defensiveness, the horrors committed by our forbearers should prompt reexamination of how we use our texts and traditions and ultimately shock us onto the path of repentance.

Contemporary ethnic polemics

Speaking of repentance, the church and the synagogue are guilty of nothing less than dereliction of duty. Where are God’s people? There are many hotspots of racial and ethnic strife in the world. Violent xenophobia plagues many areas, from the obvious problems in North America and Europe to anti-Haitian bigotry in the Dominican Republic and the anti-immigrant sentiment against other Africans in the Republic of South Africa. In Europe, racism against Arabs and blacks as well as anti-Semitism has become more open. The deadly conflict between Israel and the Palestinians is another example of ethnic violence that captures headlines. The treatment of indigenous, aboriginal peoples and other ethnic groups in the US, Canada, Latin America and Australia are other examples. I have selected two major issues in the United States, which I will employ to further elucidate the theological position I laid out above. I will look at anti-Muslim bigotry, also known as “Islamophobia” and anti-black racism. These are pressing problems in the United States, but before the American church and synagogue can tackle them, we must first understand them.

Anti-Muslim bigotry

In North America and Europe, Islam, a religion with over one billion adherents, has been on the receiving end of a great deal of hatred. The September 11, San Bernadino and Pulse nightclub attacks in the US—as well as a spate of terrorist attacks in Europe, including particularly fatal ones in Paris and Nice—were inspired by violent, Islam-identified cults such as al-Qaeda and ISIS. These deadly, horrifying incidents have fueled the disparaging, negative rhetoric about Islam.

Because Islam is a religion, and not an ethnicity as such, many of those who disparage Islam claim that they should have a free hand to attack the religion. “Islam is not a race,” declare those who polemicize against Islam, excusing themselves from charges of racism while indulging in religious bigotry. When biologist and professional atheist Richard Dawkins was called a racist for saying that Muslims had not won many Nobel Prizes, he defended himself by tweeting, “Muslims aren’t a race. What they have in common is a religion...”³⁵ When asked if he was surprised by the controversy over his Tweet, he wrote, “Am I surprised? Only at the number of people who seem to think Islam is a race, rather than a religion. I regard that view as racist. Anything you can convert to, or convert from, is NOT a race.”³⁶ Similarly, neuroscientist, famed atheist and Islam critic, Sam Harris writes in a response to Glenn Greenwald’s accusations of “Islamophobia:”

But the only way that Muslims can reasonably be said to exist as a group is in terms of their adherence to the doctrine of Islam. There is no race of Muslims. They are not united by any physical traits or a diaspora. Unlike Judaism, Islam is a vast, missionary faith. The only thing that defines the class of all Muslims—and the only thing that could make this group the possible target of anyone’s “irrational” fear, “disproportionate” focus, or “unjustified” criticism—is their adherence to a set of beliefs and the behaviors that these beliefs inspire.³⁷

Yet, because religion is often an ethnic marker, this excuse cannot be sustained. People have been using religion to disparage foreigners since Mesopotamian texts accused the Amorites of religious barbarism in the third millennium BCE. The use of religion to attack foreigners has been extensively catalogued throughout this book. The conflict in Northern Ireland, and the use of Catholicism in anti-immigrant rhetoric in the US in the nineteenth century also undermine this attempt to deflect charges of racism or xenophobia. Because of the importance of race in North America and Europe, and the linkage between darker skin and non-European societies such as those of the Middle East, the foreignness associated with Islam will most certainly be ethnic foreignness.

One cannot, then, simply cast aside the ethnic implications of anti-Muslim polemics. Despite its similarities to Christianity and Judaism, in most of

Europe and in North America, Islam is considered a foreign religion and is associated with non-natives. The religion is always a major topic of discussion in debates on immigration in North American and Europe—including infamous comments made by President Donald J. Trump. Islam has adherents of many different ethnicities, accepts converts from all ethnicities, and some of those converts are white North Americans and Europeans. Yet, a religion branded foreign can retain its sense of foreignness even when those considered native-born practice it. Recall that in the Hebrew Bible, Deuteronomistic texts maintained that religious practices of which it disapproved were still foreign even when Israelites engaged in them. Additionally, certain cults such as the Bacchanalia, Isis worship and even Judaism were considered “foreign superstitions” that corrupted Romans, even when Romans themselves participated.³⁸ Similarly, anti-Muslim bigots claim that the intrusion of these foreign religious customs will degrade and corrupt “Christian” America and Europe. To them, toleration for the small percentage of Americans who claim to be Muslim means that Sharia law is right around the corner.

When someone says “Islam,” what do they mean? The texts of Islam, such as the Qur’an, Hadith and centuries of jurisprudence? Islam as it is actually practiced by the diverse communities that comprise over one billion people? An idealistic “core” that embodies the best values and sentiments in Islam’s sacred texts? In anti-Muslim polemics, “Islam” means a core belief system that glorifies violence and war, and all Muslims are susceptible to becoming violent because these violent beliefs constitute the essence of Islam. As we will see, this way of construing Islam is specially tailored to cast Islam in the most negative light possible.

Harris claims that his negative view is based on Islamic “beliefs and the behaviors these beliefs inspire.”³⁹ These ideas, Harris asserts, comprise “*the doctrine of Islam*”⁴⁰ (singular!) and “*the tenets of Islam*.”⁴¹ Most scholars of religion would find this definition of Islam—or any religion—inadequate, at best. First, he conflates the content of *texts* such as the Qur’an and Hadith with *doctrine* and Muslim “beliefs.” Doctrines are theological ideas based on *interpretations* of a religious tradition’s sacred and authoritative texts, filtered through centuries of reflection by commentators, and developed by various communities who bring their own contemporary cultural and social biases to bear. Tellingly, Harris like many anti-Muslim polemicists, is quick to cite Qur’anic passages and Hadiths that promote violence and war, to claim that Islam is inherently violent, but he refuses to engage in any meaningful exegesis. He is entirely uninterested in the interpretative history of these passages. In his bibliography, there is not one citation of a commentary on the Qur’an or Hadith, modern or premodern, theological or secular, or even a basic book on Islamic belief and practice.⁴²

Many religions, in fact, should not be evaluated primarily by their doctrines. Ancient historians are particularly sensitive to this because many ancient religions were more concerned with practice than they were with creeds or

doctrines. Theological beliefs and assumptions underlie Deuteronomistic texts for sure, but they also seem to care less about how many gods Israelites *believe* in, so long as they only *worship* Yahweh alone in Jerusalem. We need to also consider a possible difference between “popular” and “official” religion. Just because religious specialists, religiously literate people or members of a particular sect are concerned with formulating religious dogmas does not mean that all—or even most—adherents are. If we base what Israelite religion, as it was actually practiced by Israelites, may have looked like only on the *ideas* found in biblical texts, we would be making a terrible mistake. The material culture and archaeology of ancient Israel paint an entirely different picture of Israelite religion from what is portrayed in, say the Deuteronomistic corpus.

Should Islam be evaluated primarily by praxis, doctrine, or some well thought-out combination of both? Harris clearly believes that “doctrines”—that is, his understanding of Qur’anic passages and the Hadith—should be the main way to evaluate Islam. When people disagree, pointing out that Islam cannot be understood based on his construction of its core beliefs, he asserts they are in denial. Certainly, doctrines and the content of authoritative texts cannot be excluded in an assessment of Islam. Additionally, the persistence and influence of toxic theology and prejudices can undermine attempts to make positive social changes in any community with entrenched ideologies. This is not unique to Islam, nor does it negate the fact that toxic ideas, like good ideas, are more likely to flourish in particular environments, shaped by history. Multi-faceted approaches are necessary to solve a problem like religious violence—ones that include placing social, political and historical factors at the forefront instead of dismissing them.

The lack of specificity among anti-Muslim polemicists is not incidental; it is a critical component of the stigmatizing rhetoric. Consequently, when someone publishes a cartoon of Muhammed, clearly designed to provoke and anger, or makes fun of Islam, they are contributing to an environment of ignorance and misunderstanding and they are participating in the further marginalization and stigmatization of Muslims. It is right to argue that in a liberal society, freedom of speech should reign supreme.⁴³ But when it comes to these flagrant acts of disrespect, the liberal is ethically bound to point out that while he or she supports the principle of freedom of speech, the protected speech in question is repugnant, vile and profoundly disrespectful. In fact, I contend that anti-Muslim speech undermines liberal values and discourse, even if the First Amendment is a nonnegotiable principle. Anti-Muslim bigots do not do this; instead, they use these situations as an opportunity to portray Muslims as intolerant.

Even with his ill-defined conception of Islamic “belief” and “doctrine,” Harris’s anti-Islam polemic rests on yet another erroneous assumption: that there is necessarily a direct line from Scripture to behavior. Scholars of religion, on the other hand, are very curious about how one gets from Point A (text) to Point B (unethical behavior). Harris might be inclined to deny that

he makes this assumption, but his totalizing rhetoric about “*the doctrine of Islam*” would belie any protest. He begrudgingly allows, almost as if he is trying to cover his bases, that social and political context might be relevant, but quickly shrugs this off because he is totally committed to the idea that the core of Islam, as he defines it, is the real problem.⁴⁴

There are indeed passages within the Qur’an and Hadith that promote violence and grossly unethical behavior, something that should be entirely unsurprising from a religion developed by a military leader in the Arabian Peninsula, in the early Medieval period. Because I find common Christian explanations of problematic biblical passages to be inadequate, as a non-specialist in Islam, I suspect that apologetic reinterpretations of violent Qur’anic passages also have their flaws. There are also current expressions of Islam, throughout the world, that are extraordinarily unethical and toxic. Many influential Islamic theological proclamations are currently formed in societies that are highly authoritarian, or that have long authoritarian histories.⁴⁵ There is no shortage of the demonic within Islam.

It is important to point out ethical problems posed by certain tenets or passages in the Islamic tradition, similar to the way in which I criticized some biblical interpretations above. But to my knowledge no one, not even from the so-called “politically correct Left,” claims that it is inherently wrong to criticize any aspect of Islamic theology and practice. The notion that one is “not allowed to criticize Islam” is straw man invented by anti-Muslim polemicists who want to define the terms of the discussion. Their goal is to make a totalizing claim about the inherent inferiority and barbarism of Islam, not to pinpoint specific toxic theologies that need to be reexamined. They accuse anyone who challenges their caricatures of Islam of placing a taboo on criticizing “Islam.” On the contrary, it is their portrayal of “Islam,” poorly and sloppily defined, as uniquely threatening and uniquely predisposed to causing violence that is the problem. The problem is also the arrogance of people like Sam Harris, Richard Dawkins, Daniel Pipes, Sarah Geller and many other anti-Muslim polemicists who insist they have the right to determine what “core principles” of Islam truly are. What was true of biblical interpretation is true of Islam: in any religion that contains a great deal of violent, unethical Scriptures, adherents will have to make a conscious, *a priori* choice about what constitutes the moral essence of their religion and sacred texts. Determining an ethical core will not arise automatically from a “plain-sense” reading of authoritative texts, and that is just as true for Islam as it is for Christianity and Judaism. That said, it is not up to racist, anti-Muslim commentators to declare what the “core beliefs” of Islam are.

Anti-Black polemics in the United States

It can be said that anti-black stereotypes, which originally served the purpose of legitimating the Atlantic slave trade (sixteenth to nineteenth centuries

CE), are an American and European pastime. The political and economic hegemony of Europe and the US over the last few centuries has assured that anti-black stereotypes have found their way to lands as far away from Europe and North America as East Asia. The negative stereotypes of blacks bear remarkable resemblance to stereotypes of Canaanites in the Hebrew Bible. European and North American writers often alleged that blacks participated in wanton sexual immorality and strange “heathen” customs in order to ideologically buttress their subjugation. As we have seen, casting aspersions on foreigners’ religion and sexuality are common ways of disparaging them, but with blacks, the Bible was invoked to support these caricatures. For Christian-identified racists, blacks were linked to Noah’s son, Ham, the father of Canaan, who they claimed spawned descendants who were inherently immoral. The infamous proslavery theologian Josiah Priest wrote that “in the law of Moses it would appear the word heathen designated solely the people of Canaan *and other branches of the negro race*.”⁴⁶ Later, Priest connects blacks with Leviticus 18 and 20:

Lewdness of the most hideous description was the crime in which they were guilty, blended with idolatry in their adoration of the gods, who were carved out of wood, painted and otherwise made, so as to represent the wild passions of lascivious desires, in both male and female forms. This was the character of the Hamethian race in old Canaan...For many particulars of the practices of the negro nations of these ages see xviiith and xxth chapters of Leviticus where it is shown that they outraged all order and decency of human society, making no difference between sisters, mothers, neighbors, wives, man and animals in their amours and sexual commerce.⁴⁷

Warped by fundamentally bigoted and anachronistic assumptions, Priest lays out an ingenious treatise linking Africans to Ham and especially the immoral behavior of the Canaanites. Racists also accused blacks of having a propensity for violence and crime. The clear acts of violence committed by Canaanites in the Bible include rape (Genesis 19; 34) and child sacrifice (Lev 20:3). It was common to use the Bible to justify the enslavement and oppression of blacks, but there was also a secular, pseudo-scientific counterpart to the theological racism. The same stereotypes of sexual immorality and violence reappeared in non-religious polemics against blacks. These polemicists rooted their views in their observations of black life, which of course, took place under the regime of Jim Crow and segregation.

In 1909, Virginia-based doctor Thomas Murrell writes:

Morality among [blacks] is almost a joke and only assumed as a matter of convenience or when there is a lack of desire and opportunity, and venereal diseases are well-nigh universal...In clinic and

private practice I have never seen a negro virgin over eighteen years of age...An investigation among negroes of all classes, the average age of defoliation was found to be about fifteen...adultery or fornication is literally not regarded a sin...Marriage is common among them and desertion as common...we find the applications for divorce outnumbering the white very greatly.⁴⁸

Along the same lines, an editorial in a southern medical journal argues that black sexual immorality stems partially from supposedly possessing large genitalia: “The genital characteristics coupled with utter contempt and cynical disbelief in the existence of chastity, together with his stallion-like passion and entire willingness to run any risk and brave any peril for the gratification of his frenetic lust...”⁴⁹ Another Virginia doctor, William H. Holcombe avers that blacks are “strongly inclined to polygamy. Their want of chastity is by no means the result of slavery, but is a remnant of that barbaric character which estimates woman in the lowest and most sensual manner—indeed as merely a beast of burden.”⁵⁰

Another popular stereotype not found in the Bible, but perhaps one that feeds off of the Protestant work ethic, is that blacks are naturally inclined to laziness. Blacks are “organically averse to labour” asserts Holcombe. “His will is too weak to command his muscles to work for their gratification... Laziness is therefore a prime feature in negro character and lies at the bottom of the necessity for slavery.”⁵¹ Closer to contemporary anti-black polemics is Frederick L. Hoffman, a statistician for the Prudential Insurance Company of America. He employed demographic data from the late nineteenth century to justify discrimination against blacks. Hoffman was especially keen to link blacks with crime and violence:

...of all the male prisoners in the United States, 29.38 percent were colored, as compared with a proportion of 10.20 percent of negro males in the total male population. Of female prisoners, 30.79 percent were colored, while only 11.09 percent of the total female population were of African descent. For both sexes, therefore there is about the same excess of negro criminality.⁵²

Hoffman asserts that “conditions of life” cannot account for higher crime rates among blacks. He:

abstracted data from the police reports of the city [of Chicago] in 1890 and compared the same with the percentages of the population for the purpose of showing whether the conditions of life, which are without question more severe for the Italians, Polanders and Russians than for the negroes, affect the other nationalities to the same extent as the colored element

but “the colored race shows of all races the most decided tendency towards crime in the large cities.”⁵³

By looking at various crime statistics from different urban areas, Hoffman confidently concluded that “the criminality of the negro exceeds that of any other race of any numerical importance in this country.”⁵⁴ He knows “without question” that the experience of immigrants is comparable to that of the descendants of former chattel slaves. And like many before him, Hoffman also highlights the sexual immorality of blacks. He comments on the “low state of sexual morality among the colored population” and uses statistics on “illegitimate” births in Washington, DC to demonstrate the “tendency of the race towards a low level of sexual immorality and vice.”⁵⁵

In light of these older racist tomes, contemporary anti-black polemics seem to prove the old maxim, “plus ça change, plus c’est la même chose.” Nowadays, conservative political pundits use an ill-defined, imprecise concept of black “culture” to explain the economic and social inequality and between blacks and whites. Heather MacDonald, a fellow at the Manhattan Institute writes in the *Wall Street Journal* that high rates of violent crime in predominantly black neighborhoods is the result of a “dysfunctional culture.”⁵⁶ Some blacks have also accepted these tropes. In a blog for the same newspaper, Jason L. Riley, a black conservative commentator writes in an unfortunate display of self-hatred, that the rapid increase in murder in Chicago is a result of “ghetto culture” and “black criminality, which is a function of black pathology, which ultimately stems from the breakdown of the black family.”⁵⁷ The very use of the expression “black criminality” and his fixation on the black sexuality places Riley in a longstanding tradition of anti-black discourse, such as that of Hoffman (recall the expression, “negro criminality” above). Rebuking anti-racist writer Ta-Nehesi Coates, Kay Hymowitz writes in the conservative journal, *National Review*, “the gross injustice of the fugitive-slave clause, of 1950s federal housing policy, and of lead poisoning cannot erase the fact that black men commit seven times as many murders as whites do.”⁵⁸ Instead, fatherless boys, unwed mothers, and “multi-partner fertility” by black men are “a root cause” of the mass incarceration of blacks. John McWhorter, another black commentator, writes that “anti-intellectualism” constitutes a “self-sustaining cultural trait” that prevents blacks from getting ahead.⁵⁹

In political discourse, it seems the word “culture” is deployed to explain everything, and yet it really explains nothing. Like the use of the Hebrew word, *ma’ āšeh* (“custom”) in Lev 18:3, the use of the word “culture” in US racial politics is polemical, not analytical. It is a word that legitimates an anti-black caricature. The power to define a “root cause” for racial disparities is what is at stake in these anti-black polemics. Most commonly used in the biological sciences, but also employed in psychology and sociology, a distinction between more immediate (or *proximate*) causes and deeper, more long-term (or *ultimate*) causes, helps us pinpoint the problem. Riley’s belief that high

rates of violence among black Americans *ultimately* stems from the breakdown of the black family epitomizes the conservative viewpoint: household dynamics among black Americans are the *ultimate* cause for racial disparities in the US. In other words, the position of conservative social critics amounts to cultural determinism. While some racial justice advocates can be criticized for downplaying proximate factors, or not theorizing the relationship between proximate and ultimate causes, to do what conservative commentators do and blithely declare that black “culture” is the ultimate cause for racial disparities is not the solution.

For conservatives, disproportionate rates of poverty and incarceration are not the consequence of a four-hundred-year history of subjugation, abuse and marginalization; they are products of a “culture” of out-of-wedlock births, promiscuity and glorification of crime. For McWhorter, it is a culture of “victimology” and “anti-intellectualism” that is the problem. Of course, those engaging in contemporary anti-black polemics rarely define “culture,” itself.⁶⁰ How do cultures come about? What sociological factors influence culture? What is the relationship between internal and external factors in the persistence of cultural practices? Anthropologists may vigorously debate the definition of culture, but all of the definitions suggest that “culture,” however defined, forms as a confluence of various historic, economic, internal and environmental factors. By contrast, most modern anti-black polemics present an image of black culture that is both *autogenous* and *autonomous*. They also fail to articulate a relationship between proximate causes and ultimate causes. As it was with Islam, the vagueness is deliberate. The refusal to theorize culture or explain how so-called black culture fits into a larger sociological and historical framework allows the anti-black caricature to retain its emotional appeal. It will be taken for granted that there is something endemic to blacks that causes them not to succeed, for that has been the long-standing, default ideology in the US.

An honest assessment of the historic, economic and environmental factors that go into the formation of this so-called culture would probably raise uncomfortable questions about the role of the uniquely pernicious, wide-reaching and historically persistent anti-black racism in the US—something conservatives desperately need to gloss over. Hymowitz’s comments about crime rates are telling. She claims that the US’s history of discrimination and marginalization cannot “erase” the disparate homicide rate between whites and blacks, which is, of course, true. But the main issue is whether or not a history of persistent anti-black racism can *explain* disparate homicide rates, and indeed it may. More important, the historical and generational impact of racism may inform what social interventions in black communities might be best—and this is the conversation most anti-black polemicists really want to avoid.

That contemporary conservative portrayals of black people sound remarkably similar to tropes that have been circulating for centuries should be one

massive, rippling red flag. Polemics against blacks have, historically, accused them of sexual promiscuity, laziness and a propensity for criminal behavior. These polemical characterizations live on in the twenty-first century not only by virtue of their rhetorical similarity, but because of their explanatory power. Even comparisons between immigrant groups and blacks in order to paint blacks as uniquely predisposed to violence or immorality is an old trope. For conservatives, that these explanations for racial disparities bear remarkable similarity to old, longstanding motifs is not a cue to be skeptical. Rather, they are enthusiastically embraced as the way to comprehend disparities between whites and blacks. Those invested in these explanations for racial inequality should appreciate how their position sounds in its historical context. Commentators who use promiscuity and sloth as explanations for racial inequalities are all but arguing that in the four-hundred-year history of these very same stereotypes, *this time* the promiscuity and shiftlessness tropes capture reality. Certainly, those nineteenth and early twentieth century observations of black life were a product of racism in a period in which blacks were under the regimes of Jim Crow and urban segregation. Now, we are told, in the twenty-first century that these suspiciously similar polemical accusations are an accurate reflection of some autonomous, autogenous black “culture.”

To be sure, there is plenty of sociological evidence one can point to in order to support these caricatures of blacks. Some studies have found that there is a higher rate of single-parent households among black Americans than among white Americans. Other studies have found that black American men have children by different mothers more frequently than men of other ethnic groups (Hymowitz’s “multi-partner fertility”).⁶¹ According to official crime statistics, the homicide rate between blacks and other ethnicities diverges widely. But there is other information that is relevant before we spin these statistics into explanations for racial disparities. For example, a National Center for Health Statistics study found that black fathers, whether they live in the home or not, are more likely to be involved in their children’s lives than fathers from other ethnic groups.⁶² This study suggests that “deadbeats” are not the only reason that the rate of single parent households is higher among black Americans. Many black fathers, this study suggests, want to be involved, and make efforts to be involved, but for some reason, this may not translate into stable cohabitation or marriage arrangements. Surveys on delayed marriage and relationship stress suggesting that economic factors place heavy burdens on relationships⁶³ and also affect whether or not people will enter into a permanent relationship such as marriage in the first place, are other avenues to explore to explain the disparity. Obviously, historically disenfranchised communities would have less access to economic security, and these facts should be relevant to determining what, if anything, these statistics about family structure might say about social life in black communities.

Divergent homicide rates reflect a certain reality about violence in some black neighborhoods. It is also true that geographic concentration of socioeconomic

depression, social disadvantage and mass incarceration are correlated with higher murder rates.⁶⁴ Also, blacks have more negative and severe encounters with the legal system (police, courts, probation, jail, prison), even with respect to illegal activity in which whites are more likely to engage—exacerbating the deep social effects of mass incarceration.⁶⁵ The point of raising these other studies and mitigating factors is not to deny that there are any harmful social patterns that can be disproportionately found among the black American population as a whole. Rather, this information undermines the use of crime statistics and family patterns among black Americans as an *ultimate* cause for racial disparities. Anti-black caricatures appeal to long-standing stereotypes, which prime listeners to accept the spurious cultural determinism inherent in the conservative picture of black Americans.

Conservatives balk at situating black social problems within a larger socio-historical picture. Like Hoffman, the racist statistician for Prudential Insurance Company, they are absolutely certain that “conditions of life” cannot explain disparities between blacks and whites. As a result, the anti-black polemicist must bend over backwards to deny the force of white supremacy in the current state of black America. McWhorter’s attempts to refute the influence of key social and economic factors on black life are a prime example. He dispatches with compelling sociological perspectives on racial disparities—particularly those of William Julius Wilson and Douglas S. Massey and Nancy A. Denton—by explaining them away one-by-one, instead of seeing these sociological findings as facets of a larger complex of anti-black racism.

McWhorter, for example, argues that mass movement of factories from the cities, depriving blacks of good paying, low-skilled jobs, cannot “specifically” explain “complete community breakdown” in urban black ghettos.⁶⁶ If one isolates that single factor “specifically,” he may be correct. But it was not a mere “moving” of the factories; it was deindustrialization which was a part of the economic downturn of the early 1970s.⁶⁷ That, along with the social alienation that comes with residential segregation, in conjunction with the other historical disadvantages blacks have faced, might explain the rise of the underclass. McWhorter claims that the black community has broken down, using the impressions of black literature and the memories of older black men and women, which portray black ghettos of the early twentieth century as more stable and less violent than they are now. It is important to note, however, as we saw above, that white observers of black life in the early twentieth century polemicized against blacks in a similar fashion, which makes me skeptical that there was ever any “golden age” of black ghetto life.⁶⁸ Additionally, McWhorter presents the pre-1960s black ghetto as merely impoverished. Black ghettos were indeed very poor, but the poverty was especially profound and had unique generational effects on blacks as a whole because of racial segregation—a segregation that was far more extreme than what any other ethnic group faced in the US. McWhorter does not consider that this state

of affairs might have set the stage for different, more intense problems in the future, regardless of how “stable” the black ghettos of the early twentieth century may have been.⁶⁹

In addition to isolating different sociological explanations in hermetically sealed boxes, McWhorter employs a combination of oversimplification and *reductio ad absurdum*, to attack particular sociologists. For example, McWhorter thoroughly mischaracterizes the argument of Massey and Denton when he claims that they argue:

...middle-class blacks who have made it out of the ‘hood are hot-house cases. Reading *American Apartheid*, one would think that across America, quiet suburbs are almost exclusively white, while all but maybe about ten thousand blacks remain cowering in dump-water flats listening to bullets flying day and night, or at best having made it to “inner ring” suburbs just outside the urban core, essentially new wings of the ghetto.⁷⁰

But Massey and Denton are clear that when they refer to the “black ghetto,” they are talking about the racial makeup of the neighborhood, not necessarily its socioeconomic makeup.⁷¹ Under this definition, up-and-coming, middle-class, black neighborhoods would be considered “ghettos” because they, too, are a consequence of segregation. Even if these middle-class black neighborhoods are well off, they still face distinct disadvantages because of the lingering effects of segregation and contemporary discrimination. This is important because while the existence of the black underclass as we know it is fundamentally tied to the legacy of residential segregation, it is not the only lasting mark left by segregation. Rather, segregation’s legacy is the existence of the particularly dilapidated inner city *and also* a regime of economic and social disadvantage faced by blacks as a whole.

Massey and Denton do not propose, as McWhorter hyperbolically put it, that being black and middle class is “almost always a matter of living on a special few ‘decent’ blocks in an area that is generally a pit.”⁷² They reasonably claim that due to the legacy of spatial segregation, blacks as a whole will continue to face “distinct disadvantage.”⁷³ The unwillingness of US society to do what is necessary to desegregate imposes constraints on blacks and will perpetuate racial disparities in the aggregate. In keeping with his rhetorical strategy of looking at certain sociological explanations of racial disparity in isolation, McWhorter downplays contemporary discrimination in the housing market, with respect to both realty and lending practices, as inconsequential, not appreciating that they exacerbate preexisting, historically-shaped disadvantages.⁷⁴ McWhorter asks us to divorce the effects of contemporary discrimination from the lingering effects of historical discrimination. Such a proposition is ludicrous, yet all culturally deterministic explanations of racial disparities seem to rest on this assumption.

A relevant problem that neither Massey and Denton, nor Wilson engage in depth is the importance of wealth in explaining racial disparities. Major wealth and net worth disparities between whites and people of color have been documented for a long time.⁷⁵ Historically speaking, blacks were excluded—by design—from major programs in which whites were able to gain relatively quick, stable access to the middle class and, consequently, accumulate wealth.⁷⁶ Wealth disparities raise all kinds of questions. For example, how does a black family's dependence on income from the labor market for financial stability, a position in which many black households find themselves disproportionately, affect life choices and priorities? Will major changes in the labor market disproportionately affect and destabilize blacks, who are less likely to have access to wealth? With less access to wealth, how would two parents divide the labor within a black household? Is it more likely that two black parents would need to work full time or that both parents would need to work longer to sustain the same middle-class lifestyle as their white peers? Do any of these factors affect parenting practices, life skills and values taught to children? These manifestations of disadvantage are not necessarily insurmountable barriers to relative success. They do not doom all, or even most blacks to a life of poverty. But they go a long way in explaining disparities between whites and blacks, even within the same income bracket, without resorting to the idea of autogenous, autonomous black culture as the explanation.⁷⁷

Above, I referred to anti-black racism as *uniquely* pernicious, wide-reaching and historically persistent. Widespread anti-black discrimination in the labor market, the housing market, lending practices and the legal system continues to this very day. These present-day discriminatory practices are piled on top of the historical disadvantages blacks face as a result of the legacies of segregation, being barred from avenues to wealth accumulation, the blow that the restructuring of the economy had in the 1970s, and so on. Kaminsky's idea of the anti-elect, which he uses to interpret the especially hostile rhetoric the Bible displays towards the Canaanites and Amalekites, is very helpful here. In the US, blacks have until very recently been defined and treated as the anti-elect, whereas many other ethnic groups, have been various shades of the non-elect. American white supremacy is an ideology of white superiority and ethnocentrism that divides the world into the superior (whites), the inferior of various stripes (non-whites), and the uniquely and irredeemably inferior (blacks, and sometimes Natives).

Recognizing the persistence and emotional appeal of polemical caricatures against black people, in particular, should inform the values one will bring to sociological and political analysis. And explanations that correspond to old stereotypes must be viewed with extreme suspicion. When it comes to negative characterizations of blacks, or any historically marginalized ethnic group, appeals to “culture” as an autogenous, autonomous phenomenon are simply unacceptable. Such a conclusion cannot just be dismissed as “political correctness” or “liberal bias,” either. Shelby Steele, another black conservative

commentator rejects racial disadvantage theories, such as those of Wilson, on the grounds that they deny blacks agency and are not “objective”:

When Wilson claims in these works that the loss of industrial jobs in the inner city is the overriding cause of the collapse of inner city black families, the growth of the black underclass, the proliferation of social pathologies, and so on, he is not giving us the results of objective research. He is offering an ideological and predetermined arrangement of causality, one that is designed to support a demand for interventions from the larger society.⁷⁸

But Wilson makes it very clear that values will always inform sociological inquiry. He does not hide that through his work he would like “to suggest how the *liberal perspective* might be refocused to challenge the now-dominant conservative views on the ghetto underclass and, more important, to provide a more balanced intellectual discussion of why the problems in the inner city sharply increased when they did and in the way that they did.”⁷⁹ Wilson’s straightforwardness in clarifying his values makes a great deal of sense because there are real historical reasons to think ethically about one’s sociological and political inquiry into racial disparities. Taking historical considerations into account, when choosing theories to explain racial disparities, refined racial disadvantage theories that take into account the relationship between proximate and ultimate causes are far more convincing than the use of autogenous, autonomous culture.

Steele claims that sociological explanations for racial disparities present blacks as helpless, which fosters a sense of paternalism among white liberals. But this is a tenuous reading of these sociological explanations. My reading of these theories is that they analyze the social and structural constraints on black advancement that need to be addressed. Internal cultural practices and individual agency are indeed variables that may play important, but proximate, roles in the persistence of socio-economic problems. These cultural factors must always be situated within an overall picture that explains the relationship between internal and external factors. By contrast, the conservative is invested in making “cultural” factors the primary explanation for disparity. This polemical portrait of black America exploits traditional stereotypes about blacks, and blames alleged moral failings for what is really a product of discrimination and abuse.

The anti-black polemics supported by conservative commentators undermine *any* attempt to help black Americans. It feeds into a sentiment, well documented among whites, that blacks are undeserving of social help.⁸⁰ Whites are, however, always seen as deserving of social intervention. If history and opinion research are any judge, there will be a significant pushback because many whites are resentful of any kind of programs that are perceived to benefit blacks. The ink was barely dry on the Civil Rights Act, when whites

began to react negatively to government programs to help blacks, including the Fair Housing Act of 1968.⁸¹ As a result, it is thoroughly disingenuous for conservative critics to root their opposition to the social programs of the 1960s in concern for the black family and a “culture” of dependency that supposedly developed as a result of the welfare state. Rather, the political opposition to social programs for blacks is rooted in white resentment against *anything* perceived to help blacks.

Since conservatives trace black promiscuity and criminality to “culture” and not biology, it would appear as though modern anti-black polemics have changed from the nineteenth century and early twentieth century racist discourse. But one must ask whether or not the cultural determinism espoused by conservative critics has any practical difference from the biological determinism promoted by racists in the past. The solution for those who promote the cultural and biological inferiority of blacks is the same: repression, violence and, above all, certainly no increase in social investment in the black community.

The response of the church and the synagogue: a proposal

Rabbis and pastors need to move beyond vague platitudes about being “made in the image of God,” or “the Gospel” to challenge their congregations. The very same biblical tradition that says all people are made in the “image of God” (Priestly), was appropriated by the Holiness tradition which preserved some pretty awful portrayals of ethnic violence (e.g., Num 31:1–20⁸²). Being made in the image of God is not incompatible with profound violence towards foreigners for biblical writers, nor has it been incompatible for later Christian biblical interpreters who have defended acts of violence against slaves, the colonized and most recently immigrants and other marginalized ethnic groups. This, too, is a grim, counterintuitive lesson of Scripture—reciting theological slogans is not enough to do the work of actually living out the best traditions of Scripture. The demonic is ever on the prowl (1 Pet 5:8), seeking to devour the best witnesses to God’s truth in the service of what indulges our fear and loathing.

Loving one’s neighbor, living the Gospel, or treating one another as made in the image of God means acting towards outsiders and foreigners in good faith. It means doing the hard and sometimes thankless work to defuse stereotypes and negative impressions so that all people can be truly seen as special creations of God and not simply “exceptions to the rule.” For the “rules” themselves must be torn down. From the pulpit and the *bimah*, pastors, priests and rabbis must not only counter the dehumanization that is at the root of ethnic bigotry; they must also call out the morally culpable incuriosity that fuels it.⁸³ If we are committed to treating others as unique creations of God, we must labor to undermine the social, economic and *ideological* barriers that keep us from doing that. Americans are simply not taught

about racism in the US, despite the fact that some high school history courses might have a section on the Civil Rights Movement, at best. Lest the people of God be “destroyed by lack of knowledge” (Hos 4:6), our church and synagogue leaders must confront their congregations with the truth about racism in all of its elaborate ugliness. We are woefully uneducated not only about contemporary racism, but also its lingering social and economic effects.⁸⁴ Despite the widespread ignorance, there seems to be a never-ending chorus of people who, having done little to study the problem of racism in its complexity, are quick to make cocksure pronouncements about race. People who have not read a single book on the trans-Atlantic slave trade, for some reason, know that African kingdoms sold other Africans into slavery. Others, who have done absolutely no in-depth research on immigration in the nineteenth century declare that “the Irish were slaves too” and so blacks should not be complaining. We should come to terms with the fact that people *in our very own congregations* either hold these views, or have been influenced by them. Then, acknowledging the problems, we need to think about what we can do to foster a discourse that promotes true, good faith, knowledge of outsiders and foreigners with the goal of viewing them as equally valuable beings made in God’s image.

It would be remiss of me to focus solely on the liberal church, which is, to our shame, predominantly white. Black and Latinx congregations tend to be more theologically conservative meaning that several theological and exegetical viewpoints in this chapter and throughout the book may be out of place in some black or Latinx congregations. Despite those stark theological differences, one of the things black and Latinx churches can do is resist the shaming rhetoric coming from conservative polemicists. For black people in particular, adopting “respectability politics” has long been a temptation. The solutions to the social problems that disproportionately affect both blacks and Latinx people, whatever the precise content of those solutions turns out to be, will not arise from moralizing sermons about pulling ourselves up by the bootstraps or sex. In fact, such an approach will probably exacerbate the problem. Part of the issue, at least for black people, is that there is such a cleavage between *professed* values and the social pressures to behave in ways that are oppositional to those values. As Orlando Patterson notes, “it is precisely the disjunction between the persistent commitment to mainstream cultural models of parental behavior, especially on the part of women, that leads to the behavioral outcome of marital dissolution and parental abandonment.”⁸⁵ Moralizing and sermonizing will only increase that cleavage and will most likely contribute to a rhetoric of hypocrisy in which people preach one thing and do another.

Alleviating some social problems will come from intensive social interventions in black and Latinx communities that take into account both the proximate and ultimate causes of racial disparities. Institutions on the ground in black and Latinx communities, such as the church, must continue

to think dynamically about the role they will play in facilitating the necessary, larger structural changes we demand. Many black and Latinx churches, acutely aware of the proximate causes for social problems as well as the external factors, can help ground a political perspective that articulates a need for attention to both. At the same time, many black and Latinx churches may be required to reevaluate conventional theological wisdom and confront toxic theology within their congregations.

Many of the problems that sociologists have observed within black and Latinx communities require individual attention. The negative generational patterns and maladaptive behaviors found in our communities, which are rooted in people's survival strategies and trauma, can be allayed through intensive therapy, such as cognitive behavioral therapy and life-skills therapy. Not only should we be aware that our communities are in dire need of such mental health interventions in conjunction with larger structural changes (and we should demand the funding for it), but the widespread taboo on therapy and “getting help” in black and Latinx communities can be challenged from the pulpit. Some blacks and Latinx people report being discouraged from seeking psychotherapy because it supposedly demonstrates a lack of faith in God. This is theological malpractice, just as it would be for a pastor to encourage a parishioner to not take medicine and rely solely on prayer to cure their physical ailments. “Let go and let God” can help someone accept the things in life they cannot control, but when it becomes a justification for magical thinking in which people do not seek the kind of help they need, it becomes dangerous, destructive theology.

Liberal and conservative churches and synagogues must engage a Scriptural tradition with texts that very disturbingly relate portrayals of foreigners. We must find meaning in texts and traditions that contain repellant ideas as a part of their legacy, regardless of how we choose to grapple with these difficult texts. For Americans, this is our legacy as a nation as well. The challenges posed by finding meaning out of a textual tradition in which many passages are ethically awful is analogous to the task of finding meaning out of a national—even global—history that also contains ethically repellant practices and traditions. Black Americans, in particular, have a monumental task in articulating love for one's nation despite all of the harmful history that litters the American past and present. The founders of the US were open racists, slaveholders, sexists and imperialists. The theological exercise I proposed above, to contemplate “what went wrong here” when it comes to unethical Scripture could also prove fruitful for ethical life in a democracy, because it is an exercise in being critical of the past, but also harnessing the ideals that will take us forward.

Like the Bible, when it comes to living as participants in democracy, we must consciously decide what traditions we will extol and develop further, and which ones we will consign to the dustbin of history as grossly unethical. For white supremacy, slavery and imperialist violence are woven into

the foundations of Western society, and as it is for Scripture, these demons must be exorcised with deliberation. Far from being irrelevant for modern ethics, as some nonreligious critics of the Bible argue,⁸⁶ wrestling with the failings of our spiritual forbearers can prime Jews and Christians to wrestle with the extraordinary failings of our political forbearers. With respect to both Scripture and history, untangling the good from the bad is a difficult task and requires creativity and ethical imagination. The future of ethical biblical interpretation may lie in continuing to discuss and argue over what the terrible passages of Scripture mean. Through the practice of wrestling with Scripture, we can strengthen our skills in ethical imagination. Our critical relationship with the Bible could help us become better witnesses of the Gospel and the idea of *šelem ’elōhîm* in a world full of ethnic violence and political confusion.

Notes

- 1 Though other Pentateuchal traditions are not as rigid. Abraham himself interacted with Canaanites, when necessary (Gen 14:17–24; 23:3–20).
- 2 I agree with Kaminsky that comparisons to the Third Reich are anachronistic (“Did Election Imply Mistreatment of the Canaanites?” *HTR* 96 [2003]: 404–5).
- 3 Chapter Two, p. 25.
- 4 Daniel L. Smith-Christopher, “Between Ezra and Isaiah: Exclusion, Transformation and Inclusion of the ‘Foreigner’ in Post-Exilic Biblical Theology,” in *Ethnicity in the Bible* (ed. Mark G. Brett; Leiden: Brill, 1996), 117–42.
- 5 Joel S. Kaminsky, “Election Theology and the Problem of Universalism,” *Horizons in Biblical Theology* 33 (2011): 34–44.
- 6 Norman K. Gottwald, *The Tribes of Yahweh: Sociology of the Religion of Liberated Israel 1250–1050 BCE* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1999 [1979]), 389–554.
- 7 Chapter Five, pp. 155–59.
- 8 See examples in Mark Levene, *Genocide in the Age of the Nation State I: The Meaning of Genocide* (London: I.B. Taurus, 2005), 78, 109, especially 125–43. Levene views genocide as something that “came to fullest fruition” in the twentieth century, as a product of the modern nation state (144). He suggests that the “modern variant” of genocide stands apart because it has “an eye to the integrity of the state vis-à-vis other competitor states, the linkage regularly manifests itself in the way that the regimes repeatedly accuse the targeted communal population of being agents of outside, extra-state forces whose alleged aim is the undermining of the state’s own efforts towards covering up, or rectifying its international weakness” (156). Levene acknowledges the stark similarities between modern and ancient/pre-modern forms of “genocide,” but suggests that an anxiety about modernization and an engagement with an international system of sovereign nation states distinguishes modern from ancient/pre-modern genocide or “wars of people-extirpation” (205).
- 9 Kaminsky, “Mistreatment,” 404.
- 10 Jon D. Levenson, “The Universal Horizon of Biblical Particularism,” in *Ethnicity and the Bible*, 169.

- 11 See n. 8.
- 12 Eugene H. Merrill, “The Case for Moderate Discontinuity,” in *Show Them No Mercy: Four Views on God and Canaanite Genocide* (ed. Stanley L. Gundry; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 2003), 93.
- 13 *Ibid.*, 84.
- 14 See sustained critique of Ben Witherington III, *The Problem with Evangelical Theology: Testing the Exegetical Foundations of Calvinism, Dispensationalism, and Wesleyanism* (Waco, Tex.: Baylor University Press, 2005), 93–109, especially 132–68.
- 15 “Moderate Discontinuity,” 91–92.
- 16 Tremper Longman III, “The Case for Spiritual Continuity,” in *Show Them No Mercy*, 180.
- 17 Daniel L. Gard, “The Case for Eschatological Continuity,” in *Show Them No Mercy*, 138.
- 18 Longman appeals to Job to claim that the suffering of the Canaanites is simply incomprehensible, “Spiritual Continuity,” 185–6; see also Merrill, “Moderate Discontinuity,” 93.
- 19 Take Merrill’s implication that because the Canaanites refused multiple opportunities to submit to Israel’s conquest, the moral problem of their wholesale slaughter is somehow mitigated (“Moderate Discontinuity,” 85–6). Leaving aside the view that an indigenous people has a right to defend its land from foreign conquerors, “insolence” is a common theme in Mesopotamian imperialism as well. Naram-Sin is said to have let those who rebelled against him go free nine times, until they rebelled the tenth time (see Chapter Three, p. 48). In the Neo-Assyrian period, cruelty against foreigners is often justified as a response to their insolence against the national god (Chapter Three, pp. 60–1).
- 20 See for example, explicit references to Scripture in the extermination of the Pequot in David Stannard, *American Holocaust: Columbus and the Conquest of the New World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 112–5.
- 21 David M. Whitford, *The Curse of Ham in the Early Modern Era: The Bible and Justifications for Slavery* (Surrey: Ashgate, 2009), 122–33.
- 22 Longman, “Spiritual Continuity,” 174.
- 23 C.S. Cowles, “The Case for Radical Discontinuity” in *Show Them No Mercy*, 26.
- 24 Josephus understands the local peoples who opposed the building projects of the Jews returning from exile as Samaritans (cp. Ezra 4: 6; Neh 3:33–4:17 [ET 4:1–23]; 6:1–19; 1 Esdr 5:63–70). Josephus clearly contends that the Samaritans descended from the peoples the Assyrians brought from abroad to resettle the land of the northern kingdom—going so far as to use “Samaritan” and “Cuthean” interchangeably (*Ant.* 9.288–91; 10.183–5; 11.19–20, 88, 302–3). I have previously noted that Ezra–Nehemiah portrays the non-Jews who lived in the land when the Jewish exiles returned as “Canaanites,” and it appears as though 1 Esdras, upon which Josephus is largely dependent, does the same, referring to them as “the people(s) of the land (*ho laos tēs gēs* *ta ethnē tēs gēs*)” (1 Esdr 5:69; 8:84; cp. Ezra 4:4; 6:21 [LXX]; on Josephus’s interpretation of 1 Esdras, see Reinhard Pummer, *The Samaritans in Flavius Josephus* [Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009], 86–91). Josephus also refers to these Samaritans (or Cutheans) as “the surrounding nations” (*ta perix ethnē*, *Ant.* 11.19–20). Notably, Josephus calls Samaritans, “Shechemites,” which suggests that he, like Sir 50:25–6, associates them with the rape of Dinah in Genesis 34

- (*Ant.* 11.342, 44, 46; Ingrid Hjelm, *The Samaritans and Early Judaism* [JSOTSup 303; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 2000], 218–22; for a slightly different view, see Pummer, *The Samaritans*, 175; Chapter Seven, 165–6). Lastly, Josephus claims that Samaritans, when convenient, refer to themselves as “Sidonians in Shechem” (*Ant.* 11.344; 12.258, 260, 262; for problems with Josephus’s portrayal, see Pummer, *The Samaritans*, 166–78) and people from the land of Sidon (and Tyre) seem to be associated with “Canaanites” by some (Matt 15:21–2; Gen 10:5; p. 110 n. 12). The understanding of Samaritans as the “peoples of the land” vis-à-vis returning Jews, the reference to Shechem, and the reference to Sidon suggest that Josephus wants to associate the Samaritans with “Canaanites” in some sense.
- 25 Though, interestingly, Luke does not label this story a parable. It appears to follow the same pattern as other parables in Luke. Compare Luke 6:39; 8:4; 12:16; 13:6; 14:7; 15:3; 18:9; 20:19; 21:29.
 - 26 For examples of the importance of ethnicity, and anti-Gentile polemics, in the Apostle Paul, see Chapter Seven, pp. 229–38.
 - 27 “There is a better way of dealing with the conflicting divine commands regarding the treatment of enemies. It is to acknowledge what is everywhere assumed in the New Testament, namely, that while there are vast and vitally important areas of continuity between Israel’s faith and that of the church, there are significant instances of radical discontinuity as well, none more so than in reference to divinely initiated and sanctioned violence. There were good reasons why the church fathers, in settling upon the canon of sacred Scripture, separated the Hebrew Scriptures from the Christian and gave to the former the designation ‘old’ and the latter ‘new.’” Cowles, “Radical Discontinuity,” 19. See other instances in which Cowles disturbingly compares what he labels the message of the New Testament with what “the Jews” supposedly believed.
 - 28 Cowles, “Radical Discontinuity,” 26.
 - 29 Chapter Seven, p. 231.
 - 30 See Chapter Four, p. 100, esp. n. 14, for an explanation for why I translate *ba’al* as “Lord,” and not as a proper name.
 - 31 Chapter Five, p. 143.
 - 32 Robert L. Dabney, *A Defence of Virginia and through Her of the South in Recent and Pending Contests against the Sectional Party* (Colorado Springs, Col.: Portage Publications, 2009 [1867]), 133.
 - 33 For a perspective on dialogical authority of Scripture, see Sandra Marie Schneider, *The Revelatory Text: Interpreting the New Testament as Sacred Scripture* (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 1999), 55–9. From a political perspective on dialogic authority, see John Cunliffe and Andrew Reeve, “Dialogic Authority,” *Oxford Journal of Legal Studies* 19 (1999): 453–65. Particularly compelling is the view that dialogic authority “is more compatible with autonomy, where authority is recognized as the result of dialogue or even negotiation. It is not once and for all, because it may be withdrawn; but it is not so autonomy-reducing, since it sees the recognition of authority as a process involving the continuing reflection and judgment of the authority subject. Taking responsibility for my life requires that I put myself in a position, as far as possible, to check up on those whose authority I have initially accepted...” (459).
 - 34 Paul Tillich, *Dynamics of Faith* (New York: Harper, 1953), 16.
 - 35 <https://twitter.com/RichardDawkins/status/365480899317473280>

- 36 James Meikle, “Richard Dawkins Criticized for Twitter Comment about Muslims,” *Guardian*. 8 August, 2013. URL: www.theguardian.com/science/2013/aug/08/richard-dawkins-twitter-row-muslims-cambridge. Emphasis original.
- 37 Sam Harris, “Response to Controversy” URL: www.samharris.org/blog/item/response-to-controversy.
- 38 See Chapter Seven, n. 48.
- 39 Harris devotes a chapter to “The Nature of Belief” in which he argues that “beliefs are *principles of action*: whatever they may be at the level of the brain, they are processes by which our understanding (and misunderstanding) of the world is represented and made available to guide our behavior” (emphasis original; *End of Faith*, 52). Harris’s conceptualization of “belief” seems too oversimplified especially when it comes to religion. There is a great deal of evidence that a person’s professed belief can outright *contradict* his or her intuitive beliefs. How can contradictory beliefs serve as a *clear* “principles of action”? There is no distinction in his chapter between on-line and off-line reasoning. Even if Harris disputes the existence of such a distinction, as some do, he should at least discuss the complexity of religious belief. For an overview of on-line versus off-line reasoning, see Chapter Two, p. 41, esp. n. 75.
- 40 Ibid., 113, 137. Emphasis added.
- 41 Ibid., 110, 137. Emphasis added.
- 42 One sociological book cited, the redoubtable Islam scholar, Bernard Lewis’s *Crisis of Islam: Holy War and Unholy Terror* is more evenhanded than Harris’s assessment. Lewis at times situates Qur’anic passages and Hadiths in their historical context and briefly mentions debates within the legal tradition of Islam, as well as some theological problems with applying Qur’anic passages directly to the present time.
- 43 “Free speech” in the context of the laws and legal traditions of the country in question. In countries, such as France, racial incitement is a crime (*JORF*. 2 July, 1972, 6803–4), and so American observers cannot hold a negative reaction to anti-Muslim propaganda in France to the same standard of free speech that may exist in the United States. The opposition to anti-Muslim speech in France is in some instances influenced by a concept of “free speech” that does not allow for racist, hate speech and is not an example of “political correctness” run amuck or increasing “*sharia*” in France. For an overview of France’s defamation laws, especially with respect to the *Charlie Hebdo* controversy, see Erik Bleich, “French Hate Speech Laws Are Less Simplistic Than You Think,” *Washington Post*. 18 January, 2015.
- 44 See Harris’s glossing over of historical factors in *End of Faith*, 131–3, 148.
- 45 Al-Azhari University in Cairo, and its influential but patriarchal and illiberal theology, is a prime example of a prestigious institution of Muslim theology developing in an authoritarian society. The role of Al-Azhari in fomenting “radical Islam” is the subject of a vociferous debate within Egypt. The theology espoused by the university draws criticism from liberal Muslims, and currently, Abdel Fattah al-Sisi, the president of Egypt, is calling for reform in the theological curriculum. But how progressive could any theological reform initiated by an authoritarian president be? See, “Reforming Islam in Egypt,” *The Economist*. 18 February, 2017.
- 46 That is, so-called “Hamitic” peoples. Josiah Priest, *Bible Defence of Slavery and Origin, Fortunes and History of the Negro Race* (Glasgow, Ky.: W.S. Brown, 1852), 112.

- 47 Priest, *Bible Defence*, 178.
- 48 Thomas W. Murrell, "Syphilis and the American Negro: A Medico-Sociological Study," *Transactions of the Fortieth Annual Session of the Medical Society of Virginia* 40 (1909): 169–70.
- 49 "Genital Peculiarities of the Negro," (Editorial) *Atlanta Journal-Record of Medicine* 4 (1903): 843–4.
- 50 William H. Holcombe, "Characteristics and Capabilities of the Negro Race," *Southern Literary Messenger* 33 (1861): 406.
- 51 *Ibid.*, 404.
- 52 Frederick L. Hoffman, *Race Traits and Tendencies of the American Negro* (New York: American Economic Association, 1896), 218.
- 53 *Ibid.*, 224–5.
- 54 *Ibid.*, 228.
- 55 *Ibid.*, 235.
- 56 Heather MacDonald, "The Myths of Black Lives Matter," *Wall Street Journal*. 9 July, 2016.
- 57 Jason L. Riley, "Chicago and Black Criminality," *Wall Street Journal*. 8 July, 2014.
- 58 Kay Hymowitz, "The Distorted World of Ta-Nehesi Coates," *National Review*. 18 September, 2015.
- 59 John McWhorter, *Losing the Race: Self-Sabotage in Black America* (New York: HarperCollins, 2000), 150. I consider his accusation of "anti-intellectualism" a version of the shiftlessness trope. McWhorter claims that he does not believe blacks are lazy, but his language and anecdotes feed an impression that blacks lack thrift.
- 60 One such project which seeks to define culture and explain its primary importance for political and economic development renders mixed results: *Culture Matters: How Values Shape Human Progress* (ed. Lawrence E. Harrison and Samuel P. Huntington; New York: Basic Books, 2000). On the one hand, some scholars, who contribute to this collection of essays, such as Orlando Patterson and Nathan Glazer, theorize the relationship between internal cultural and external factors. See Patterson, "Taking Culture Seriously: A Framework and an Afro-American Illustration," 202–18. Glazer notes that the cultural traits that are often credited with the success of a culture are based on historically imprecise characterizations ("Disaggregating Culture," 219–30). Whether I agree with Patterson's or Glazer's conclusions, they have certainly done the work to carefully theorize the role of culture. Other contributors, such as Lawrence E. Harrison, declare via superficial comparisons that "the racism/discrimination explanation of black underachievement is no longer viable" ("Introduction," xxi). He bases this sweeping conclusion on educational and income disparities between Hispanics and whites and a sketchy comparison between Hispanics and Japanese and Chinese immigrants. One of the mistakes Harrison makes is that he assumes that all "discrimination" is alike. Another author, David Landes, asserts that "culture makes almost all the difference" by making sweeping comparisons between the economic development of Latin America and the Meiji restoration in Japan by way of Weber's theory of the Protestant work ethic ("Culture Makes Almost All the Difference," 2–13).
- 61 See studies cited by Kay Hymowitz in "The Breakdown of the Black Family," *The Atlantic*. 4 October, 2015.

- 62 Jo Jones and William D. Mosher, “Fathers’ Involvement with Their Children: United States 2006–2010,” *National Health Statistics Reports* 71, Hyattsville, Md.: National Center for Health Statistics, 2013.
- 63 Jessica H. Hardie and Amy Lucas, “Economic Factors and Relationship Quality Among Young Couples: Comparing Cohabitation and Marriage,” *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 72 (2010): 1141–54. Pamela J. Smock, Wendy D. Manning, and Meredith Porter, “‘Everything’s There Except Money’: How Money Shapes Decisions to Marry Among Cohabitators,” *PSC Research Report* 04–564, Population Studies Center, University of Michigan, 2004.
- 64 Michael T. Light and Jeffrey T. Ulmer, “Explaining the Gaps in White, Black and Hispanic Violence since 1990: Accounting for Immigration, Incarceration and Inequality,” *American Sociological Review* 81 (2016): 290–315.
- 65 This is particularly true with respect to drug use. See National Research Council, “The Growth of Incarceration in the United States” (ed. Jeremy Travis, Bruce Western, and Steve Redburn; Washington, DC: National Academies Press, 2014), 60–1; Leah J. Welty et al., “Health Disparities in Drug and Alcohol-Use Disorders: A 12-Year Longitudinal Study of Youths After Detention,” *American Journal of Public Health* 106 (2016): 872–80.
- 66 John McWhorter, *Winning the Race: Beyond the Crisis in Black America* (New York: Gotham Books, 2005), 77. Another conservative black commentator, Shelby Steele, also isolates Wilson’s thesis, denying the flight of industrial jobs as a root cause for the black underclass (*A Dream Deferred: The Second Betrayal of Black Freedom in America* [New York: HarperCollins, 1998], 24). This is only a partial understanding of Wilson’s argument. Wilson argued that the jobs left and there was a restructuring of the economy that made low-skill jobs less likely to be a gateway to the middle class than they were in the past.
- 67 For a summary of the economic restructuring of the 1970s which led to a shift to low-paid, low-skilled jobs (a process that has continued to this very day), see Sherry Cable and Tamara L. Mix, “Economic Imperatives and Race Relations: The Rise and Fall of the American Apartheid System,” *Journal of Black Studies* 34 (2003): 199–201.
- 68 McWhorter addresses some earlier negative impressions of the black ghetto in *Winning the Race*, 33.
- 69 One of the most common conservative arguments is that welfare benefits in the 1960s fomented a “culture” of out of wedlock pregnancies and lack of desire to work. This is one of those explanations that evokes stereotypes of the past (promiscuity and laziness), and so its usefulness as an explanation for *ultimate* causes should be viewed suspiciously. In at least one sociological analysis, that of Massey and Denton, they see the increase in welfare benefits in the late 1960s as playing a role in the development of a harmful “black street culture.” But they do not stop there. The extreme concentration of poverty and spatial isolation faced by inner-city blacks worked together to create a situation in which welfare benefits could have this kind of negative effect (*American Apartheid*, 9, 165–81).
- 70 McWhorter, *Winning the Race*, 80.
- 71 “Our use of the term ghetto refers only to the racial makeup of the neighborhood; it is not intended to describe anything about a black neighborhood’s class composition...a set of neighborhoods that are exclusively inhabited by members of one group, within which virtually all members of that group live” (Massey and

Denton, *American Apartheid*, 18–19). McWhorter’s impressions may stem from the fact that Massey and Denton are not always precise in their terminology and do not always clearly separate the uniquely impoverished conditions of the inner city from more affluent black communities. This is probably because they see both as variations of the same root problem. The main point that Massey and Denton make is that residential segregation has negative economic and cultural effects on blacks as a whole, even upwardly mobile blacks who live in largely black neighborhoods, *in addition to* the fact that the black inner-city, as its own problem, is rooted in explicit practices of residential segregation. However, when referring to the black inner-city, Massey and Denton use the terms “ghetto blacks,” “ghetto attitudes” and “the culture of the ghetto,” (Massey and Denton, *American Apartheid*, 166–7, 172, 179). Since they have used the word “ghetto” to describe all segregated neighborhoods, regardless of socioeconomic status (even relatively affluent, predominantly black neighborhoods), the occasional use of “ghetto” to specifically describe the black inner-city seems contradictory and inconsistent. Elsewhere, they use different terminology to describe the lifestyle of the so-called black underclass, referring to it as “black street culture” (177–9).

72 McWhorter, *Winning the Race*, 83.

73 Massey and Denton, *American Apartheid*, 150–3. They also argue that “race operates powerfully through urban housing markets and that racial segregation interacts with black class structure to produce a uniquely disadvantaged neighborhood environment for African Americans” (220). Even upwardly mobile blacks find it harder to escape residential segregation. Massey and Denton aver that one-third of blacks live in conditions of “intense racial segregation.” It is clearly a minority of blacks who live in these conditions, but nevertheless that statistic still makes blacks “the nation’s most spatially isolated and geographically secluded people” (*American Apartheid*, 77). One of the major points Massey and Denton get across is that blacks are uniquely segregated, even more so than immigrant groups and so comparisons between the two are inappropriate. The unique spatial segregation blacks face has negative, generational *social* effects (*American Apartheid*, 150, esp. nn. 10–12), which can intensify feelings of alienation between blacks and larger American society.

74 McWhorter acknowledges persistent racism in the present day but argues that the issue is “degree” (*Winning the Race*, 88). But McWhorter provides no scale to by which to measure his imaginary “degrees” of anti-black discrimination. Does McWhorter measure degrees by the horrors of the pre-Civil Rights era, or does he compare disadvantage faced by blacks with other ethnic groups in the present day? It may well be that the “degree” of discrimination against blacks has dissipated significantly, at least from Jim Crow-era levels. The point raised by a number of sociologists, however, is that the “degree” of discrimination and disadvantage faced by blacks is clearly, and distinctly, greater than that of other ethnic groups because of historical and contemporary discrimination.

75 Melvin L. Oliver and Thomas M. Shapiro, *Black Wealth/White Wealth: A New Perspective on Racial Inequality* (New York: Routledge, 2006); Meizhu Lui et al., *The Color of Wealth: The Story behind the US Racial Divide* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2006). See also Massey and Denton, on generational effects of social and spatial mobility (*American Apartheid*, 150).

- 76 Ira Katznelson, *When Affirmative Action Was White* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2005); Richard Rothstein, *The Color of Law: A Forgotten History of How Our Government Segregated America* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2017).
- 77 This speaks to some of McWhorter's arguments in *Losing the Race*. His argument that black academic underperformance can be traced to a black cultural trait is preposterous. I, too, have noticed some of the problems among black students in higher education that he notices, but I have also observed different explanations. In my personal experience as an instructor, black students are often distracted by political activism for long term institutional change and family obligations, in addition to making ends meet through work study and financing their education. Additionally, I object to his characterization of an oppositional stance many black students take toward the institution they attend as “anti-intellectualism.” It could well be suspicion of educational institutions with racist histories.
- 78 Steele, *Dream Deferred*, 24.
- 79 William J. Wilson, *The Truly Disadvantaged: The Inner City, the Underclass and Public Policy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 5. Emphasis added.
- 80 Martin Gilens, *Why Americans Hate Welfare: Race, Media and the Politics of Antipoverty Policy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999).
- 81 See Massey and Denton, *American Apartheid*, 186–216 for their overview of the massive resistance to fair housing in the US.
- 82 Though the passage might be Priestly (George B. Gray, *Numbers* [London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 1986], 419–20).
- 83 Opinion research suggests that whites are, demographically speaking, uninformed about the state of racial discrimination in the US. For some recent data, see Pew Research Center, “On Views of Race and Inequality, Blacks and Whites are Worlds Apart,” 27 June, 2016. Accessible at: www.pewsocialtrends.org/2016/06/27/on-views-of-race-and-inequality-blacks-and-whites-are-worlds-apart/
- 84 See *ibid.*, in which most respondents argue that racism is more of a problem with individual attitudes than systemic problems.
- 85 Patterson, “Taking Culture Seriously,” 216.
- 86 See Hector Avalos's critique of Jon D. Levenson's “recontextualization” and “reappropriation” approach in *The End of Biblical Studies* (Amherst, N.Y.: Prometheus Books, 2007), 261–70.

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